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The Peak and the Plain:

Scenes in Woodland, Field, & Mountain.

By
Spencer T. Hall,
The Sherwood Forester

"My Native Cot"

London
Holliston & Stoneman:
Paternoster Row.
1853

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THE PEAK AND THE PLAIN:

SCENES

IN

Woodland, Field, and Mountain.

BY

SPENCER T. HALL, M.D.,

"The Sherwood Forester,"

Author of "The Forester's Offering," "Rambles in the Country," Mesmeric Experiences," "The Upland Hamlet," "Life and Death in Ireland," &c., &c.

"The fields his study, Nature was his book."—*Bloomfield*

Second Edition.

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AND ADVANCEMENT IN YOUTH,

TOILED AS FEW SISTERS HAVE TOILED,

THEN DIED WITHOUT RECOMPENSE,

SAVE IN HEAVEN,

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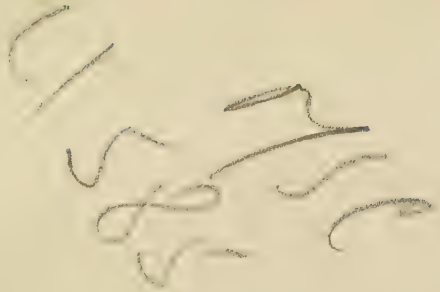

ADVERTISEMENT.

This book is its own history, and needs but little introduction. Its aim is to give, not merely a general description of the highly picturesque regions of the Peak of Derbyshire and Sherwood Forest, as they early photographed themselves on the brain and heart of one born amid their beauties, but to diffuse over the whole subject that light and warmth of soul, which the most romantic landscapes, and the charm of their history, could not fail to kindle in one who, from infancy to manhood, ever looked on Nature and Humanity with an admiring, loving, and reverent eye.

In consequence of the personal incidents he has related being often as picturesque and characteristic as the scenery described, the Author has sometimes been charged with trespassing on the realms of fiction; but real life and faithful history, when rightly viewed, are proverbially more romantic than fiction; and he can safely assert that, while endeavouring to render this work as discursive and amusing as possible, he has in no instance sacrificed truth to fancy.

Derby, May, 1857.

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HANDSWORTH
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SCENES

IN

WOODLAND, FIELD, AND MOUNTAIN.

Chapter First.

ELEANOR SPENCER.

NEAR the commencement of the last century, there stood among the hills, between Wirksworth and Winster, in the Peak of Derbyshire, a lone farm-house, belonging to a decent yeoman of the name of Spencer. It was a substantially built and furnished homestead; and contained, in addition to the usual requisites of such a place, several armorial relics and large old chests, ornamented with the crests of the farmer's ancestors, some of whom, it appears, had taken their part in the civil wars of the previous century, or in those of a still earlier time. So small, however, was

the account now made of such matters, that the carved chests had become transformed into common corn-bins, and a large broken sword had, by virtue of repeated grinding, been diminished to a cheese-knife, at the period to which allusion is here made.

The peaceful pursuits of the grazier and shepherd having thus superseded those of the cavalier and round-head, it happened, one bright summer day, that the farmer and his servants were all gone to the harvest field, leaving only his wife and an infant boy at home, when a strange phenomenon occurred, which various minds may perhaps as variously explain: but as to the fact itself I have never heard a doubt. The infant was sleeping in a crib or cradle, and the mother went into the garden for a moment,—it seemed but a moment,—and on her return was constrained, with uplifted hands, to exclaim:—"Good God! my child, my child is changed!"

Now, whether she supposed that for her true child another had been substituted; or whether it had been transformed or transmuted in its own individuality; the family narrative does not with certainty tell. The sceptic may say, "pooh, pooh," and think that sufficient to puff out the light of the whole story for ever. The believer in witchcraft and enchantments may also venture his explanation; whilst the modern advocate of animal magnetism might give another. But the simple people amongst whom the event fell out, not doubting on their return from the field, (any more than the mother herself,) that the child had undergone an entire change of some kind, referred the

whole business to the influence of the fairies; and to this day, the subject of it is talked of by the hamleteers of the neighbourhood as Fairy Robert, and is said to have had a perception of things not familiar to common sight.

Be the latter as it might, this is certain, that he grew to be a comely, sedate, and reputable man; was the father of a well trained family; and, when ninety years had silvered his few remaining locks, he had still a speaking eye and some of the bloom of youth upon his cheeks. It was when he was above that age, that a little girl, of about four years, played one afternoon for some time at his feet, and then, with a wondering and reverent look, as he sat in a ponderous old brass-nailed chair, climbed his knees to pat those spots of bloom with her tiny fingers; when some tender thought came mantling to his face, and he looked down on her with a glistening eye and a pensive smile that she never forgot.

This was in the bleak, grey, moorland hamlet of Middleton-by-Wirksworth; and that little girl was Eleanor Spencer, his granddaughter—or, as she was called by her rustic compeers, "Nelly i' th' Fieldt,"—the family homestead being in a place commonly known as "The Field." Many years afterwards she told me the story, in substance as I now tell it to you; but she made it still more interesting by adding many particulars of her own life, over which such recollections could scarcely fail to have had great influence.

Eleanor's parents both died much about the same time as her grandfather, and were buried near him in

Wirksworth church-yard. Besides one sister of the name of Hannah, she had four brothers—Benjamin, Daniel, Robert, and James. Benjamin, being the elder, took charge of the property and the care of the family; but he soon dying, too, most of the property was retained by his widow. Eleanor, being a beautiful child, was now taken by an aunt, who was very proud of her, and trimmed her out in gay dresses and ribbons, until she happened to fall ill of the small pox. With the beauty of her skin passed away the skin-deep affection of her aunt; and so, at a tender age, she was compelled to find work as a dairymaid and shepherdess.

It was a great treat, in after years, to listen whilst she described her occupations amongst those romantic scenes. Scarcely a moor in all Derbyshire had then been enclosed. The revolutions of Arkwright's wheels had not, as since, caused an equally marvellous revolution in all the features of the neighbourhood. Here and there a dun "groove-hillock," with its rude and primitive machinery, and the *pecking* sounds of the lead-miners at their simple toil, though it might relieve the prospect from the idea of utter desolation, took little from its wildness. And,—save when the hunters, in full cry, threaded the valleys far winding below with their scarlet gleams,—the black frowning bulk of Stonnus Rocks, the cloud on Masson, the foaming waterfall on Dunsley, the distant roaring Derwent, and (in those days) an occasional eagle sailing and hovering between cliff and cliff over her scattered flock, would, in some seasons, be almost the only objects and voices with which her young mind could be made familiar, as she

sat (plying her knitting-needles at intervals) with her charge around her. Truly, there would be other seasons when—the sky being sunny, and warm, and blue, and the broom, and furze, and heather in bloom—the lark would sing its lilting song on high, and a thousand thrilling replies in one sweet chord would be heard from the streamy cloughs and dells below; and, instead of the strange, vague feelings inspired by yon imagery just suggested, there would now come springing out of, and playing about her little soul, hopes and imaginings unutterably delightful.

It was on some such occasion as the latter, that she once drove her flock rather higher on the upland side than usual, the horizon expanding farther and farther as she ascended, until scenes remote, and as strange and interesting to her as the Indies to a Columbus, met for the first time her youthful gaze, and filled her with eager wonder and ecstasy. Down in one direction she could see deeper among the crags and bowers of Matlock Dale than ever. In another direction, faded ridge after ridge of mountain ranges—first bold and green, then blue and more faintly blue, till lost afar in the glimmering light—with seldom a human habitation or a sign of cultivation of any kind to mark them. But, turning again from this, what a contrast seized her eye! Beyond where the Derwent rushed and shone, atween the heights of Lea Hurst and Alderswasley,—beyond the cliffs and carrs and tors of Holloway and Crich, the ruins of Whinfield Manor, the pastures of Buckland Hollow, and the pleasaunces of Alfreton Park,—was a still further array of unknown towns, and villages, and

towers, and spires, flanked or surrounded by dusky woods and fruitful fields, on either side of the Erewash valley. However far her sight might stretch, there were new objects to meet it; and, though she then knew it not, the young shepherdess was gazing from her first mountain-home, in the Peak, on her future home and last resting place, within the ancient and shadowy precincts of Sherwood Forest!

The whole scene acted upon her gentle yet ardent spirit with an attractive and mysterious spell. Whence came that nice sense of a kinship with prospects so remote, and that conviction which thereafter haunted her, of a destiny amongst them? And why dwelt her eye repeatedly and long upon one particular spot on the dim horizon, as though *there* more especially, or near it, lay hidden the chief point of that attraction? The sequel may perhaps, in part, be needed to explain this; though it is not at variance with the general experience of mankind, that there should be, between the youthful heart and its future lot, a telegraphic sympathy of which ordinary reasoning can take no cognizance.

It was certainly not in obedience to any design or contrivance of her own, that, soon after this, a dairy-maid's place was found for Eleanor, at the village of South Normanton, down on the extreme border of the county, and within a few miles of the spot in question. At that period most of the traffic among the hills, and between them and the lowlands, was carried on with the aid of pack-horses and mules; and with a train of these, conducted by her brothers, who were coming

into the neighbourhood for *crates* of coals, was it that she was brought to her new situation at Farmer Purday's. But what a transition! In the country she had left, beyond the Derwent, to the borders of Staffordshire and Cheshire, mile after mile of moorland extended without any artificial partition or fence; or, if one did happen here and there to exist, it was composed of uncemented stones, and was hardly distinguishable from the grey scattered fragments of rock whence its half-shapen materials had been taken. But the village where she now found herself was surrounded by gently sloping fields of from one to seven or eight acres, each smooth and verdant as a meadow, or waving with golden corn, and cut from the others into a square by exuberant hedgerows of the greenest thorn. The only important exceptions to this regularity of outline consisted of a pastoral common, since enclosed; a few old mansions, half embowered by their "ancestral groves;" and a little trout-stream, trailing and curvetting through the centre of the valley, sometimes gleaming through, and at others entirely hidden, though not unindicated, by the trees and brushwood growing along its banks.

Farmer Purday's land lay chiefly by that stream, somewhat more than half a mile from the village, in a lonely place called the Berrysters; and as Eleanor went thither in the morning to milk her cows, she saw the sun rise over the uplands of Sherwood Forest; or, when returning with her evening pail, would she watch its setting among the dun peaks and knolls of her native mountains. As the days became shorter, she was often there before it was light, when an owl hooting over her

head would startle her cows, and conjure up in her mind many superstitious fancies, from which at times even the strongest hearted are not entirely free. In this way, and with the indoor labours of the dairy, passed on her time as she grew into womanhood; and such were the occurrences and associations by which her imagination was touched, and her understanding educated. She could also read her Bible, and loved its precepts in simplicity and sincerity; and, added to all the rest, she had a cheerful smile, a gleam of merry-thought or motherwit in her glance, and many evidences of a warm and tender heart in her manner and tone. Time, too, had smoothed from her glowing cheek those marks of the small-pox, with the first appearance of which had fled the sympathies of her aunt; and, if not absolutely beautiful, she had much that was pleasant and even engaging in her looks, when she first made her appearance in the neighbouring little town of Sutton-in-Ashfield, mounted upon a bay pony, with a butter-maund hung on her well-turned arm, as the deputy of her mistress, one market day.

Repeated visits of this sort led at length to her coming to live in the town, as a servant of Mr. and Mrs. Burton, who, with their family, to the end of life, continued to regard her with as much affection as though she had been their own. In the same town dwelt Samuel H——, a prosperous bachelor, a Quaker, living according to the strictest rules of his sect, dressing in the most quaint and primitive style of that body, with a very broad hat and a capeless coat, and with manners in most particulars corresponding.

"Nelly," said Mrs. Burton one day, "I want you to go on an errand to the Quaker's."

"Would you please, Mistress, to let some one else go in my stead?" asked Nelly.

"But why do you wish that?" inquired Mrs. Burton.

"Because," was the girl's reply, "there is something so singularly droll in his dress and manner, that I am afraid of being tempted to laugh when I am there."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Burton.

"Nonsense or not nonsense," rejoined Nelly, with a threatening smile, "I'm sure I shall be tempted to make fun of him and call him Aminadab."

"Get you gone, mischievous hussy," said her mistress, with a look of mingled severity and good nature, "and if I hear of any behaviour of the kind, you may expect such a scolding from me in return, as you never had before, for there is not a better man in all the town."

She went. But the Friend at home, divested of his broad hat, was different from the man she had supposed him, on merely seeing him pass in the street. The words he spoke to her were few, and to the purpose. His seriousness awed her, but it was blended with a frankness that at the same time engaged her; and it was not in her power to have thought, much less to have uttered, anything irreverent to him or irrelevant to the occasion;—wherefore she remembered him ever afterwards with profound respect.

By this time, however, Eleanor had won the love of a young stocking-weaver, of the name of James B——, and soon became his wife. He was a steady, affectionate, and industrious man; but they had not been

married many years, ere he fell into a consumption, and was at the point of death. He too had become, in principle, a Quaker; and Samuel was one evening sitting at his bed-side, endeavouring to supply him with the solaces of friendship and the encouragements of their common faith.

"Samuel," said James, "there is only one burden which presses me to the earth, and makes me wish to linger; but it is a very heavy and painful one."

"James," was the ready reply, "if thou art free to name it, and it be in my power to lessen its weight, or even to bear it altogether, let me know."

The eyes of the invalid filled, as he said—"It would be all removed could I only be assured that, when I am gone, my poor wife will not want a friend to comfort her, or the two children a counseller to help them in acquiring good principles."

"Thy family shall not want a friend, James," said the other; "I will myself act the part for them about which thou art anxious."

"Thank thee, thank thee," said James, in a tone of affection and gratitude, as the tears gathering before now freely flowed; and in a few days his unchained and unburdened spirit had found its heavenly rest.

* * * * * *

Seven years had passed since the departure of James B——, and though his friend Samuel had met with many sad reverses of fortune, so far as was possible he had been true to his promise. What wonder, then, if

the widow had grown not only grateful, but desirous of making him, in his own adversity, such returns as she could for his kindness to her in hers? Perhaps, too, some coldness to them both, on the part of the world, in the hour of misfortune, made them feel warmer towards each other; and one fine day, on his asking her to take a rural walk with him, she joyfully went. Strange contrast with her satirical threat, on her first errand to him from Mrs. Burton's!

They took the road towards the Forest, and ascended one of Robin Hood's Hills, which command a vast expanse of country, including the far Derbyshire range, where Eleanor had formerly tended her brother's sheep, when suddenly she recognised the place they were now upon, in Nottinghamshire, as that very spot in the landscape to which her heart had been so wondrously drawn in early days; and here came the solution of that mysterious problem of the feelings! After standing awhile, silently gazing back to the west, and musing on the dispensations of Providence upon which had depended those curious vicissitudes of life that had made them thus acquainted—"Eleanor," said Samuel, with some emotion, "I have found no one in the world who seems to take a more kindly and unselfish interest in my happiness or sorrow than thyself, and for seven years I have fulfilled the promise of friendship made to James. Let me now be the husband of the widow, and the father of the fatherless, and one home shall serve us all: wilt thou be my wife?" It was more than she had ever hoped or dreamed of; but, gladly consenting, they were soon afterwards married.

In a garden by the side of a brook, on the outskirts of the town, was a lowly thatched cottage, which in more prosperous days he had let to others. Thither they now retired, to live by humble but honourable industry, and the first offspring of their union was the writer of this simple though faithful narrative.

Chapter Second.

RURAL INSPIRATIONS.

HOW the morning scenes of life retain their dewy freshness, even when its day is far advanced! Instead of hiding or obliterating them, all succeeding impressions become tinged with their character. Thus the pictures which Nature loves to paint so vividly on the young mind still glow as through a transparency, imparting their hues to the experience of after years. Who is there among the sons of study, or of traffic or toil, however weary his life or depressed his condition, unable to look back upon at least one fair spot, endeared and hallowed, perhaps, by some glad event, that lingers still, a lively star, in his receding horizon, yet sends its cheerful ray through all subsequent prospects; —some scene that, like an oasis left behind in the desert, enables him still in memory to feast his love of the beautiful and the precious, until imagination brings again the full charm to his feelings! For it is often to the pleasures of memory we owe the pleasures of hope; just as the bright hues of morning suggest the

glories of sunset to the mind, and give us promise of other days as bright to follow.

Born in that old cottage, and early committed to the nursing and care of that elder half-sister and brother, the children of James B—, to whom reference has been made, I was necessarily trained from veriest infancy into a familiarity with the objects of their pleasures,—pleasures mostly of a rural character, but in addition to which a taste for reading should not be omitted. This familiarity with nature, as youth advanced, dawned into admiration, and in manhood became a confirmed and passionate love. It was my brother's habit, even during the first spring that followed my birth, to wander out with me in his arms into the fields and lanes, there to listen to the wild birds' carollings; to watch the gambols of the young flocks and herds; and to muse on the progress of vegetation, as it evinced itself in the budding copses, the flowering banks and bushes, or the greening woods and slopes within a short distance of our home. And it is easy to imagine with what pleasure and pride my sister would, in following years, as my perceptive powers gradually developed themselves, take me by the hand in her short excursions, and point out, and talk of, those simple sources of her own delights.

Whether it be owing to impressions thus early received, or whether the impressions themselves were dependent upon any peculiarity of organisation, or whether, as is equally probable, I am indebted to the reaction of these causes one upon the other, I know not; but certain it is, that from a tender age, I have been,

ever and anon, impelled to visit all scenes afar or near that were in any degree distinguished for beauty, sublimity, or historical interest—an impulse I could never gratify without rapture or suppress without pain.

O, with what pleasure I now recall the young days, when, actuated by this motive, I wandered about, conscious of a purpose, but unable to define it—filled with "a sweet content, a wordless thankfulness"—among happy scenes that are mapped upon my soul in lines that can never fade;—scenes, the very names of which are pictures the reader might know them by, as they appeared until changed by modern improvements. Forest-side, Holbrook-hay, Ling-side-road, Langford-longs, Greenfield-lane, Gipsy-lane, Woodman-dale, Maple-wells, and Green-woodfalls—dear poetic designations of not less dear poetic scenes—grouped in one, my native parish as they were! How sweet, at this distance of time, again in fancy to wander among them, gathering their flowers, paddling in their brooks, or lingering alone by the wood-sides to hear their countless, nameless, mingling melodies!

With such an education, it was no wonder that, as years increased and knowledge extended, more distant scenes added their charms to these. Thus, not only such spots as were consecrated by the footsteps of genius and history, but many hitherto comparatively untrodden and unsung, drew me from the dusty turnpike of daily life with a witching spell. Many are the storied memorials of deeds most dark in darkest ages. Our country abounds with them from shore to shore.

But I began to feel that there were other scenes and objects too little valued and enjoyed, and to which the attention of mankind could not be too much drawn—numberless actions, unselfish as those of the good Samaritan, shedding their balmy influence on the creation around them without a record. Hence it was, I arose and said,—Blessed be the spirit of every nameless man who has dug a well and planted it round with trees, and left it to flourish through long, long years! The joyous note of every bird that singeth in that bower is a tribute to his worth; as is every grateful feeling of the creatures which cool their thirst at the well. Blessed be the spirits of all those, who, without ostentation or selfishness, have in any way contributed to beautify the world and soften the lot of humanity! Though undistinguished by men be the places where they rest, yet will Winter spread over them his annual pall, and Nature renew their epitaphs in flowers at spring! And doubly cherished be the thought, that God has set his own impress on all that man has yet left unchanged! Wherefore let us feel that we are in communion with something blessed wherever we go; since there is no spot of earth without some touch of interest. And let us, while we are heeding the exterior, look also into "the life of things." Let us remember, that all scenes have an individuality as well as a locality —a sort of growing soul, that lives through every transformation and survives the wrecks of time. So that though every age cannot boast its Robin Hood in ballad minstrelsy, there is no era in any place without its peculiar charm; and the day that sees no deeds of

chivalry, or outlaw's fray, may rejoice with far purer joy over the useful achievements of agriculture, and the many triumphs of industry, social order, and genius, which have superseded them. Yet let us not for this relinquish all sympathy with the past; for every old remnant, whether of mound, castle, abbey, hermitage, or woodland bower—every monument of ancient savagery, as well as of modern civilisation, has its own especial lesson for those who will read; and if it answer no other purpose, is at least useful as a mile-post on the path of time, whereby the advancement of our general humanity may be estimated.

Come, then, and ramble away with me! Yet let him that comes be no dandy or pedant; but with his wallet on his back, and his stick in his hand, let the homeliness of his heart be expressed in his face, that he may win himself a welcome wherever he goes; for of such are the men that *never trespass*. The moment they are seen, even on comparatively private ground, they are instinctively felt to have a sort of right to tolerance there; and there is no true nobleman or gentleman who will not have them protected rather than molested. So if you chance to be of that character—if you feel the right of every man to enjoy the world in every way he can, without infringing on the rights and enjoyments of others—if you would rather walk half a mile than break down a fence; or, to advance the cause of science, of literature, or of improvement in any shape, would wind through tangled woods without breaking a bough—cross a field without injuring the crop or molesting the cattle—view a mansion or its pleasure

grounds without abusing the privacy or personal comfort of the owner—and contemplate a relic or monument of art without disfiguring it with your initials—then we shall be capital companions for each other, and will roam the country round together. We will find a fresh store of health, knowledge, and gladness, at every turn of our path. We will be buoyant on the hills, and reverent in the valleys; druids among the rocks, and bards in the woods; yet Christians everywhere, so far as we can; that the world may be left no worse, but better if possible, for the humble fruits of our wanderings and meditations.

Chapter Third.

ROBIN HOOD'S HILLS.

HERE, then, we start, and ere long we will away into the wildest and deepest recesses of Sherwood Forest. But, in the mean time, let us linger a little about its western outskirts: for it is still of the loved scenes of my younger years I would discourse; and *here* they chiefly lie, upon this green strip of border land called Ashfield—a name derived from almost every hedgerow abounding in ash-trees. It is a district extending from Bolsover Castle to the Trent; varying from three to five miles in breadth; and enjoying a character of its own, equally distinct from the deep blue landscapes of Derbyshire on one hand, which at first rise from it gently and gracefully, then run up in the mid-view somewhat boldly, and at length strike abruptly and picturesquely into the Northern Peak; and the dim grey plains of Nottinghamshire on the other, that spread away into the far distance, without presenting a single obstacle to the view of Lincoln Cathedral, which, from the ridge of Cocksmoor, may

be seen, in clear weather, nearly forty miles hence. standing like a faint cross, apparently *beyond* the verge of the horizon itself.

This Cocksmoor (now enclosed) is one of the low and irregular range called Robin Hood's Hills; and, though not the steepest, it is the highest, and at any time worth a visit from the rambler whose eye can comprehend a great expanse of scenery. To any other, it would be comparatively tame and uninteresting. Its summit, which is not more than a mile from the Sutton and Kirkby stations of the Nottingham and Mansfield railway, may be gained by two or three very easy field-walks. One of them is up by a farm-house, at the foot of a little eminence, called, from its shape, the Round Hill. Another, from its being before the general enclosure on the edge of the heather, is called the Ling-side road. And though on reaching the highest point, just beyond where the pathways meet, you might be inclined to ask, at first, what was to repay you for wandering so far, you would not very long remain unsatisfied. As you quietly began your survey, gently expanding the sphere of your vision, object after object would gradually reveal itself, until your mind became a camera obscura, where would concentre, in all their variations of living light and shade, the distance-softened outlines of four or five different counties. Yes, there, as I have said, far in the east, over a grey, unbroken immensity of heaths and woodlands, the towers of Lincoln just *touch* the sight. To the south, some of the frontier heights of Leicestershire, catching the blue tint of the sky that bends over

them, are faintly scanned. Duskily and solemnly in the west, the hills of Derbyshire seem *rolling* away from you; whilst the black array of Yorkshire uplands beyond Sheffield are advancing from the north to meet and greet them!

And if the bounds of the prospect be interesting from their immense distance, the objects they encircle are not less so from their classical and historical associations. Within their compass, and at no great distance, lie embosomed in their own woods, Byron's favorite domain of Newstead, the Annesley of his Mary, and the Hucknall of his tomb. On the other hand, and almost equi-distant, towers right ducally in full view the Hardwick Hall of the Cavendishes,—of Elizabeth Shrewsbury and her ancestors,—the domicile, for a short period, too, (as some will have it, though as others will not,) of Mary queen of Scots,—the undoubted residence, however, of the famous philosopher Hobbes, and the haunt and theme of a number of the most tasteful and cultivated minds of the last three centuries.

Nor are these the only points of interest, though many must go unmentioned. The dark cap of the Masson, at Matlock Bath, swelling up beyond Crich Cliff, so familiar to all midland tourists, is seen towards the western horizon, from which the tired eye returns to rest on the spires of Kirkby and Sutton, which steal up into the sunshine, not more than two miles off, so unobstrusively, as to win the more attention by that very fact. And here, nearer hand, embowered among old trees, is the lesser Hardwick, at which Cardinal

Wolsey rested on his way to Leicester, where he died, though many erroneously suppose his rest was at the other and prouder Hardwick. By way of contrast, not far off, are yonder not inelegant mansion and factory, with a blue water-gleam between; their history, and that of their builders, a modern tale. Whilst down in the valley, on the other side, stands the ancient town of Mansfield, in drowsy peace. Hambleton Hill, where king Henry II. is said to have been lost when hunting, and arrested on suspicion of his being a poacher of the royal game, divides the valley just in front of you, —now a cultivated valley, lit with many a bright reservoir and mill-pond, supplied by the Maun; but in former times, a wilderness through which it mourned along, little used or noticed, towards that region where, so remotely from the eye, Grove House, with all its amplitude and its elegance, is diminished to a mere speck in the dusky space!

But there is yet something more, as interesting as any of these. Looking in a north-easterly direction, not so far as the last-named object, but beyond those light-grey breezy downs which are streaked here and there with the green lines of young plantations, see you not, intersecting the scene, an extensive and solemn array of gigantic *plumes?* Ah, my companion! those are the thousand-year-old oaks in Birkland and Bilhagh—forming together, perhaps, one of the finest remnants of ancient forest scenery in the world! They wave beyond the ruined hunting palace of king John, at Clipstone, and the Parliament Oak, under the spreading branches of which, some six hundred years ago,

Edward I. held a famous national council;—beyond that region of modern plenty redeemed from ancient desolation by the Duke of Portland's celebrated agricultural experiments, which will remain the wonder of ages, and a monument of what may be achieved when enterprise is united with patience and capital in works of utility and peace;—and just behind the pleasant and noted village of Edwinstowe, where, in the remote days of the Mercian Saxons, king Edwin kept his royal court. There, too, they will wave in the eye and heart of the historian and the poet for ever; for genius in many a graphic page has now made them her own! But we go not thither now. Yet as we wander along this upland ridge, in the direction of Annesley and Newstead, let us take a few more glances at the country around us, and a few thoughts of the great hero of its history, ROBIN HOOD, in whose name there is magic! Know you not, that every hill we can here look upon—every valley the line of which we can trace in the varied landscape—was as familiar to him as is your cheerful hearth at home to you? Yes, it is verily upon the wide and beautiful realm of that potent sylvan monarch we are gazing; and—tread lightly here—*perchance we are standing upon his ancient throne*:—

> And was it not a glorious thing
> For that free-minded forest king,
> In his wide rural reign, to own
> This flower-clad hillock for a throne—
> His hall the plain that round it lies,
> Its walls the groves, its roof the skies;
> A rock, by Nature carved, his seat;
> The moss a cushion for his feet?

Methinks I see the monarch now,
With dignity upon his brow,
A steady radiance in his eye—
In all his person majesty—
Dictating kindly to a band
Of loyal friends, that round him stand
And catch his words with kindred glow,
Then on their greenwood missions go!
Ah! what a wondrous change hath come,
Since then, upon the outlaw's home;
Yet here his name a charm hath cast
Will linger while the scene shall last!

Chapter Fourth.

ROBIN HOOD'S HISTORY.

SO then you ask me if I really believe in the history of Robin Hood and Little John? The answer will require some qualification; but I will give it you frankly.

If you mean, do I believe in even a tithe of what has been popularly linked with those names in the ballads and nursery tales of the past five centuries, there can be no hesitation in answering—No. But after much research and deliberation, the conclusion to which I have come on the subject is—that, though Robin Hood may be, as some have asserted, a myth of the Anglo-Saxons, somewhat analagous to the modern Captain Rock of Ireland, or the Rebecca of the Welsh, and, like them, impersonated by different men in different places—there was still one person who more magnanimously and effectively represented the character than the rest, and who, avoiding all ferocity, yet doing with his followers many doughty deeds, acquired the sway almost of a magician in the localities he haunted

I believe him to have been born at, or in the neighbourhood of, Locksley Chase, where the little river Locksley comes pouring from the Bradfield moors into the Rivelin, near Sheffield. Every village in England of the name of Locksley has laid claim to the distinction; but there are several reasons for regarding this as the likeliest of them all. In the first place, it was the land of Earl Waltheof, who, with his retainers, withstood the Norman conquerors longer than any other chieftain of the old Saxon race; and many of the inhabitants, for generations afterwards, would doubtless inherit something of that spirit of independence and resistance of which their fathers had left such a memorable example. And in the last place, there is even yet existing, in the self-same neighbourhood, a significant vestige of the existence of such a band as he is said to have had at his command, now known by the name of the "Hallamshire Hunt."

The members of this "hunt" are nearly all poor working men. Those of them who cannot afford to keep hounds contribute a certain sum to assist those who do. In this way they support a first-rate pack, with which they occasionally sally forth into the country, all on foot, led by a huntsman *dressed in green and gold, and bearing a small bugle*. I have often met with, and sometimes run with them, in the still wild and primitive dells and cloughs of the Derbyshire and Yorkshire border. On one of those occasions, the huntsman told me he had no idea how the hunt was first organised, but that it was very old, and that he had himself heard or seen the names of his predecessors in

the leadership of it for more than two hundred years! One thing is very clear;—that such a regular organisation of grinders, peasants, &c., for such a purpose, is totally opposed to the genius of the Norman game laws, and could only have been first established by a band of men for which those laws, however stringent, were too weak—and that must necessarily have been many ages ago.

Since, then, the Robin Hood who fought in the patriot army under Simon Montfort, Earl of Leicester, at the Battle of Evesham, is said to have met with Little John there, and, according to the old chroniclers, (on his being outlawed,) to have returned to the neighbouring forests after that event,—since many of his followers, inheriting the spirit of the previous generation, had probably been drawn (and it might be under his leadership) from the same district,—why should they not, on returning home at last, still retain some features of their former free life, and transmit them to posterity, as we see, in this "Hallamshire Hunt?" That there is such a band as that now described, or was within these seven years, any one may easily prove, by going into the locality and inquiring; and that I have myself, when residing in a cottage at Ecclesall Bierlow, often been awakened by the huntsman, who came round with his bugle at day-dawn to call out the pack, and have hunted with them in the romantic valleys of the Rivelin and the Locksley, is just as true as that I am making this simple record of the facts.

I do not, however, believe, that the Robin Hood in question was Earl of Huntingdon; but that he was first

so titled in a ballad of the reign of Henry VII., to give more of a fancied grace to his character, when that ballad was enacted in great houses as a play; Hunting*don* probably being the name selected from all others for the sake of rhyming it, according to the convenience and rude taste of the writer, with Little *John*. In the ballad of "The Lytell Geste," which bears marks of having been recovered from a still older one, and is by far the most rational and tasteful of them all, he is called "a good yeoman." And, though there are many reasons for supposing that he really was buried at Kirklees Park, near Huddersfield, it is not doubted by some of the best antiquaries that the noted inscription on the stone there, which calls him Earl of Huntingdon and gives him altogether an earlier date than that now contended for, is, to say the least of it, very apocryphal.

But, by universal consent, whether a myth or a man, a patrician or a plebeian, he is understood to have been a noble by nature,—gentle, yet dignified; generous as brave; and, though an outlaw, loyal. How pleasant to contemplate such a spirit, in contrast with some of the rapacious and ferocious men of that dismal time, as we now wander among these open and peaceful scenes still bearing his name; or down in the northern and more rugged parts of the forest, among the caves of Cresswell Crags or Markland Grips, which are imagined to have been his more especial strongholds! How we admire his there gathering around him the dispossessed and defeated patriot, the bereft, the oppressed, the forlorn, the castaway,—nay, too probably, also the profligate and the apostate, to whom even so rude a form

of society as that of his day allowed no means of gaining a position once lost,—and giving them shelter, food, and counsel, in those wild retreats! And, in any case, whether we admit his veritable personal existence or not, we must love intensely the country that, through all the changes of centuries, has ever been proud of its Alfred and its Robin Hood—those grand ideals of a king who scorned to have, and a subject who scorned to be, a slave! For, though the charge does hang over Robin and his band of being outlaws, we have to consider not the less what it was that made them so, and how much worse they might have been but for such a captain,—whether they elected the man to the character because they thought him best qualified to sustain it, or honoured it in him because it was inherent.

Chapter Fifth.

LITTLE JOHN.

AND now you ask me, who and what was Little John? The proofs of his *distinct personality* are more clear, on the whole, than those of Robin Hood. There is scarcely, so far as I could ever make out, an old inhabitant of Hathersage, in the Peak of Derbyshire, who doubts that Little John is buried in the church-yard of that parish; and after the most careful examination of all available evidence—written, traditional, or analogical—I must in justice own to a considerable share in that belief. It is true that Mr. Rhodes, a tasteful writer, whose name I mention with every feeling of respect, as well as one or two others, have expressed in their works a contrary opinion. But let us hear what may be said on the affirmative side of the question.

As the story runs, Little John, (so called in jest,) otherwise John Little, or more probably John-le-Tall, was born somewhere in Derbyshire or Staffordshire, in the early part of the thirteenth century, and brought

up to the business of nail-making, till his gigantic stature, strength, and prowess, determined him on going an adventurer into the world. Little is known of him before the battle of Evesham, which took place in August, 1265, at which time he was found with the rebels or patriots under Montfort, when, sharing in the general defeat, and being outlawed with Robin Hood and others, a party of them retired, as Fordun intimates, "into the fastnesses and thickets;"—and where so likely as the neighbourhood from which they had first gone, and in which they could best rely upon popular sympathy and aid? Here, with a small band of chosen men, dressed in green and gold that they might be undistinguished amongst the furze and broom of the landscape, and with auxiliary help that could be increased or diminished at pleasure, they appear to have lived by hunting in Barnsdale and Sherwood Forest, and by levies of blackmail made on those they supposed to be most capable of sparing it. It is said, however, to have been Robin Hood's boast, that he "never hurt a woman in all his time, nor a man in woman's company," and that he loved to be "the rich man's almoner for the poor."

Between two such characters, in circumstances so peculiar, nothing could be more natural than that a close friendship should spring up. Their dangers, toils and successes, were mutual; and the destiny of one became that of both. In their irregular way they were masters, at one time, of all the country between the Trent and the Calder; and many wonderful works of nature, as well as every relic of human ingenuity or

labour not otherwise accounted for, is to this day attributed to them by the common people,—just as in Warwickshire everything of the kind is attributed to Earl Guy, in Cornwall to King Arthur, or in Ireland to King Brian Boroihme,—men whose personal existence no one necessarily doubts from the mere circumstance of superstition, always the ally of ignorance, having loaded their memory with extravagant additions.

At length, Robin Hood having died and been buried by Little John in Kirklees Park, according to his own request, with "his bow in his hand, and a green sod under his head—another at his feet," John soon began to feel that his own turn was coming, and set out with a view to rest his ashes in his native place. But tradition says that, when on his journey, he no sooner saw the vale of Hathersage from a hill on the Yorkshire side, than from some extraordinary presentiment he exclaimed that it was the place where he should die; and on reaching a cottage near the church-yard gate, he entered it, and shortly breathed his last.

About ten years since, I was in that cottage. I went also to the grave to which he is said to have been carried from it. It was a cool and dreary evening, for the time of year, when I first visited the church-yard. There had been a funeral; and an aged sexton was covering up the old parishioner just laid still in the lap of his mother earth; whilst the vicar of the parish, likewise an aged man, grave and pensive as the scene and the hour, was walking among the tombs, apparently muttering in communion with something invisible. The weather, with all its dreariness, was not

stormy; but there was what Burns would call a *soughing* among the head-stones and the wiry grass, which sounded very melancholy. It seemed "like the moaning of Nature, when she sorrows for all the wars and great battles, and every kind of wrong that has been done in the earth;" and when I looked on the cold narrow bed of the sleeping hero, stretched out between its two grey and worn-down stones, a sense as of the dim old time when he was laid there came upon me, and I could fancy myself a witness of the mournful spectacle.

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin;"

and if a tear moistened my eye on turning away to the cottage where he died, it was a tribute surely not to be ridiculed in a Sherwood Forester.

The house alluded to is a rustic and, doubtless, a very antiquated one, with exceedingly thick walls, built without lime. When I saw it, it was half mantled with ivy and shaded by trees. In it then lived Jenny Sherd, who had full faith, not only in Little John having died in the cottage, and having been buried in the church-yard, but that it was in the very grave still pointed out, with a little stone at each end, which stones some foolish young men, once working at another grave, had placed farther apart than they originally were.

I ventured to suggest that the sexton then in office did not feel sure that the grave described was Little John's, though he might believe him buried somewhere in the church-yard; and that people more learned had doubted his interment there at all.

"Ah," said Jenny, "it's very easy for one man to set his judgment up against a whole parish, who have all as good, and many of them a better chance of knowing than him; but some folk are so odd and purvurse, they'll hardly believe their own senses; and as to larned folk, why, mester, I'll just tell you: it isna' larning makes folks wise—it isna' edication at a schule 'at always gies 'em sense. Books often rack folk's brains out o' their heads—but they may sometimes be studied a long while afore they'll put ony in."

There was no arguing against such close rustic reasoning; so I asked the old woman to tell me exactly what she herself knew upon the subject, which she proceeded to do in the clearest and straightest manner possible. No counsel could have stated the case more cogently.

She said that she was born in that cottage, and was now (1841) seventy years old. Her father, William Bohem, who had dwelt in it from his youth, died at the age of ninety-two, and had he lived to the date of her narrative, would have been a hundred and twelve years old. He received from his predecessors, at the time he entered upon it, the assurance that Little John had died there; and *they* had received the same information, sixty years before, from those who had preceded them; and this was the way in which the tradition had been preserved from Little John's time, not only by the successive tenants of that house, but by almost every old family in the village.

I suggested that this was a small house for a man of John's reputed stature to stand in.

In reply, she assured me that, within her own memory, the interior consisted solely of one large room, which was open to the rig-tree. She said I might see by the style of the cottage that it was many hundred years old, having been reared before lime came into use in building such dwellings, although the neighbourhood abounded in limestone; and there was a statement in the tradition, that his body stretched nearly across the floor when he was dead. Her father who, though a working tailor, was a learned and intelligent man, having a good knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages, and being, withal, very scrupulous about crediting idle tales, had full faith in the whole story, believing that an entire parish could never have consented to a falsehood on the subject, and especially as most well-informed people, for many miles round, gave their implicit credence to the fact.

Jenny well remembered, she said, when Little John's grave was opened by Captain James Shuttleworth, and a great thigh-bone brought from it into the cottage and measured upon her father's tailoring board, when it was found to be *thirty-two inches in length*; and, though decayed a little at the ends, it was thick throughout in proportion to that length. Two shovels had been broken in digging the grave, and the bone had been broken near the middle by the third shovel striking it; but she declared that the parts corresponded with each other exactly, and that there was no artifice or deception in fitting them together. The name of the sexton who opened the grave was Philip Heaton, and the great bone was taken by Captain James

Shuttleworth to the Hall; but his brother, Captain John, was so offended at him for having it exhumed, and he met with so many severe accidents—two of them in the church-yard—while it was in his possession, that at the end of a fortnight he had it re-placed. Some years after, however, being with his regiment in garrison, at Montrose, in Scotland, he sent to her father, promising him a guinea if he would take it up again and send it to him in a box; but her father would not comply with the request. When she was about twenty years old, a party of "great folk" from Yorkshire, had it re-exhumed, and took it with them to Cannon Hall, near Barnsley. Up to that time, *Little John's cap* was kept hanging by a chain in the church, [as it is said his bow had done till within the last century,] but even this, the tasteless and foolish party in question also took with them. Jenny said she remembered all this very well; and, with every other old person in the village, had a particularly distinct recollection of the green cap that hung in the church, and which "everybody knew" to be Little John's.

Such were the particulars I was able to gather when somewhat more than at present an enthusiast in such things; and I have faithfully given you what was thus learnt from others. If the narrative be less merry than stories about Robin Hood and Little John are in general, perhaps what may be wanting of mirth is made up in truth; but respecting that, I must leave you to your own conclusion.

Chapter Sixth.

MY NATIVE STREAMS.

WHILST the waters of Derbyshire rush through the winding valleys with a roar, made louder by the stern silence with which their mighty neighbours, the rocks and mountains, look down upon their course, —or come leaping from the bosky bank-sides with a laugh and a shout into the sunshine, waking all kindred natures to extacy by their tumultuous glee;—whilst, on the other hand, the streams of the Nottinghamshire plains go quietly and solemnly, with low, mysterious, druidical mutterings, through the glades and groves of the forest;—those of Ashfield rejoice in a mediatory character of their own, delightfully accordant with the country they fertilize and beautify. To the generality of them, the designation of "singing brooks" belongs, in its most emphatic application: and sweetly do their cadences vary, from full wild warblings to the softest swells and falls of Æolian melody, as they wander about in the green-tufted pasture fields, or form little *lins* in the herbulent and bowery dells

Fond indeed has ever been my love of my native brooks; for though they are, as Ebenezer Elliott has so well described them, "ever young;" yet there is a tale of other times in their prattle,—a hymn from antiquity in their more melodious outpourings,—which fail not to make them genial companions, even of those whose joy is in pensiveness, and whose sympathy is with the "Ancient of Days." So that as all emblems of human life, from the fragile flower to the vigorous tree, are mutable and fade; the immortal spirit of man, in every gradation, may find meet fellowship with one of these fresh and freshening brooks,—for its source, its on-flowing, and its destiny, are all emblematic of his own, and the words of its song are "For ever and ever!"

So numerous, however, are the streams and streamlets which intersect the district in every direction, that to describe the course and the peculiarities of each, would be an employment almost interminable. Suffice it, then, that a few are chosen as representatives; and first we will take

NUN-BROOK.

Not that it is the largest, the loudest, or even the fairest; but simply because, from some happy poetic impressions in childhood associated with it, to me it is one of the dearest. When first I knew Nun-Brook, it ran copiously from an ancient mossy well, the entrance to which was formed of three large stones, set between

two of the finest old bowery hawthorns I ever gazed upon. This was on the brow of a fair sunward slope (about one mile west of Sutton-in-Ashfield) called the Maplewell Close, from the quantity of maple growing in a dingle at its foot. From the cool green grot I have mentioned, the brook flowed almost immediately into a spacious circular basin, forming a bath, to which the diseased poor resorted from all quarters, in consequence of the famous medicinal efficacy of its waters.

I know not if its gentle name of Nun-Brook had been derived, in early catholic times, from this quality combined with its exquisite purity, or whether from a nunnery which tradition says existed in the vicinity. But as the tradition is uncorroborated, so far as I have been able to learn, by any written authority, I am inclined to think the former its most probable, and not unapt, derivation. For whilst cold within itself almost as ice, and pure as ether, there was a well known kindly, healing influence in its nature, somewhat akin to the miraculous, and well calculated to induce a belief in its sanctity. From the reservoir before described, it sped on its way rejoicing, down the green slope and into the thicket at its bottom, through which it pursued its musical course for nearly a mile, obscure as a cloistered nun, leaving you to guess of its sweetness and beauty by its voice alone, until it once more emerged into the light at the Green Wood-falls, where after gleaming but for a moment, it coyly veiled itself again from view, and you could thenceforward trace its path into the distance only by its graceful train of foliage.

Such, twenty or thirty years ago, was Nun-Brook; such the appropriate fountain from which it flowed! But a sad change has come over the scene since then. We hear much of the "march of intellect," the "march of improvement," and many other high-sounding *marches:* but it is worth while considering how far this popular phraseology may in some cases have degenerated into mere clap-trap, and have been bandied about from mouth to mouth for the purpose of drowning the stealthy foot-fall of innovation and the tramp of avarice, which the *poor* of the land *feel* passing over many ancient and precious privileges! What chimera the inhabitants of the country-side were pursuing, while this inestimable common-right was quietly filched from them, is more than I can tell; I think they were raising a subscription for a political agitator. But when in the year 1829, or 1830, the field was sold by auction, it was managed, without any legal authority, to stop a footpath to the place which had been open to the public for centuries! They then destroyed the well, uprooted the trees, filled the bath with earth, and turned the channel of the stream itself into a sough,—and I have never heard that a single word of remonstrance was raised against the proceeding! I have often conversed with old people who had gone to the place, freely and fearless of obstruction, with large holiday parties, nearly fourscore years before, because such was *then* the common custom—a relic, no doubt, of wonted festal pilgrimages to the spot in the days of catholicism; and I could collect hundreds of instances of infirm people (many coming from great distances) who have

been cured by the unprohibited use of the waters; yet I cannot hear of a single instance in which any man has had the courage to demand a restitution of so invaluable a public right!

Paying a visit to Maplewell Close in the year 1838, judge of my emotions when I saw that the stream had struggled from its bondage about half-way down the declivity—had burst from the sough, and was leaping about in the sunshine as though overjoyed by its escape—bounding, bubbling, and ranting about for very extacy!—and fine revengeful havoc it was making with the field, for having been so long and so unnaturally pent up, by choosing for itself twenty new channels into the brook at the bottom! But, alas! this delicious frolic was of short duration; and you cannot now get a taste or a glimpse of its waters, till they have become adulterated by additions from several subsidiary springs and drains Would that the owner of the field, who has, I know, some good endowments both of taste and feeling—would that he could be brought to a sense of the injury done by a step of which I am willing to believe he never knew the sad importance—and so be induced to make a voluntary restitution to the public of its rights in the spring, the bath, and the narrow pathway to them! The pecuniary sacrifice to him would be almost too trifling for consideration, and yet would endear his name to future generations. Would he but voluntarily liberate this valuable *physician of the poor*, whose diploma came from the great Lord of Nature himself, what a pleasure there would be in recording a deed so honourable!

HOLLOW—OR HOLLY-BECK.

This stream rises within a mile of Nun-Brook, and for a short distance runs nearly parallel with it. The two anciently formed the side-boundaries of a fine old wood called Fulwood, extending from Holbeck Hay, (now corrupted into *Howbeeka*,) almost to Brookhill Hall. Of the wood itself few vestiges remain, its site being at present nearly all under tillage. What does remain, however, is on the banks of this brook, which, spite of all changes, still winds its way, "with its usual flow and its ancient song," honoured in its progress by a train of hollies, ever-green, from which, or from its deep and almost hidden recesses, comes its pleasant name. After blending its own dove-like voice for a short time with the tender lullaby of the ring-doves which haunt the shades of Bloomer's Wood, it falls into a rather wild and lonesome little dene called the Dumbles; a spot where, as it appeared to me in my young-day wanderings, Solitude held her most secret and solemn court; from which it escapes into the verdant, park-like domain of Brookhill, and soon falls into the Erewash.

THE LEEN, OR LIN.

Rilling from the feet of the hills that bound the valley of Newstead on the north and west, and congregating in that deep blue lake, the waters of which go weltering to the ancient front of the Abbey, are several

sweet streamlets I have often traced, forming the sources of the Leen. There is scarcely any view to be taken of Newstead from its surrounding uplands, in which you do not catch a glimpse of some one or more of the beautiful chain of lakes and lakelets fed by this classic river. Precious, indeed, to every Byronian pilgrim, must be his memory of the Leen; for in none of the Poet's solemn haunts at Newstead can he have trod, in which its waters have not poured their melancholy yet delicious music into his ear—into his heart! Nor does it leave all its classic interest there, when it winds through the woods into the neighbouring domain of Papplewick. Poets had fallen in love with it—had made it their Helicon, and drawn inspiration from its beauties, long before Byron's day. Ben Jonson whiled some pleasant hours away on its banks, at Papplewick, and gathered imagery there for his "Sad Shepherd," before the Byrons augured of the renown of their deeds in arms being excelled by that of their name in the fields of poesy; and between that period and the morning when Byron awoke and "found himself famous," Mason, in his "English Garden," had heard its presiding nymph say or sing—

> "For when the Spirit creative deign'd to move,
> He moved upon the waters. O revere
> Our power: for were its vital force withheld,
> Where then were vegetation's vernal bloom,
> Where its autumnal wealth? But we are kind
> As powerful; O let reverence lead to love,
> And both to emulation! Not a rill
> That winds its sparkling current o'er the plain,
> Reflecting to the sun bright recompense
> For every beam he lends, but reads thy soul
> A generous lecture." &c.

Winding along the side of Beskwood Park from Papplewick, it passes through the villages of Bulwell and Basford—not in themselves retaining many features of rural life or beauty—yet where, on its banks, mused in in his morning hope the poet who was soon to startle us into wonder at the brilliancy, power, and originality of his genius—the author of "Festus" and "The Angel World."

From Basford, the Leen "trails its willow-locks" along the valley to Lenton, where its current becomes divided,—one portion of it running along the lane-sides and across the fields into the Trent, opposite Wilford church yard, that beloved resort of Henry Kirke White, in the days of his gentle decline. The other, sweeping round by the Druids' Caves, in Nottingham Park, and washing the base of the Castle-rock, afterwards falls into the Trent just above Colwick Hall, where lingered, till near her death, the *Mary* of Byron.

Of the many little tributaries to the Leen, none is more beautiful or fresh than a brook that comes, with a joyful gush, from beneath an old stone cross at the bottom of Linby village-street. I think the cross itself must have been saved by virtue of its being at the head of that natural fountain; for it was left uninjured by the Puritans, when almost every other relic of the kind in the neighbourhood—one at the upper end of the same village—was broken in their zeal; or, if you will, their frenzy. But the air of all that sweet old neighbourhood is filled with the dreamy music of wandering streams.

THE MAUN AND COLDWELL.

WANDERER wild, with the pensive name! In what dim old time was it, that listening to thy descent by slow and gentle steps into the thickening forest, they designated thee so aptly from the verb, *to moan!* What do I not owe, of my own desultory and abstract character, to thy example and influence! Thou wert my playmate in childhood at the Willow-bridge, day by day, through the long summer hours; when, with feet all bare and sleeves up-turned, I dallied with thy wavelets and minnows, thy pebbles or thy flowers, in untiring delight, and left thee with regret when the day was done. And when the amusements of infancy were laid by for the inquiries of youth,—when the fancies of the dreamer became the pursuits of the topographer,—how I still loved to trace thy mysterious course from scene to scene, and watch with growing pride the growing force of thy current! My "winding Ayr," my "bonny Doon," my tiny Trent or Thames, my miniature Mississipi! My more than all of these together,—my Helicon and my Jordan! I envy not the man who loveth not his native stream, even though it boast no greater magnitude or name than that of rivulet or rill!

From the fields of Kirkby Hardwick and Roundhill Farm,—from the tricklings of "Gadsby's Weeds," and even the spring in my father's garden,—from the ancient "Ydle Wells" in our town street, and the outpouring from "Old Bath Wood," are concentred in the valley between Sutton and Mansfield, (formerly *Maunsgeld*,)

the useful waters of the Maun, joined by another stream from the eastern foot of Cocksmoor, called the Coldwell Brook. How an American would smile on hearing that such little rivulets as these are called rivers, and have ancient names! They are such as we have, however; and to him who can look on Nature with a microscopic as well as with a telescopic eye, they abound in beauties, and bear with them from age to age the charm of history.

Now falling into some little rocky hollow, next gleaming out in some open meadow, the Maun takes its way from Mansfield, by Mansfield Woodhouse, to Clipston, where, by an artificial divergement, it is made to refresh with successive crops a tract of land that, till recently, could do little more than fatten a few rabbits. Passing the village of Edwinstow, it reaches Ollerton, where it is joined by the Rainworth Water, that comes winding by Rufford Abbey, from the neighbourhood of Fountain Dale; and presently meeting the Meden, they together form the Eadle or Ydle, (or, as it is now spelt, the Idle,)—simply an old name for water. The Idle falls into the Trent at Stockwith, below Gainsborough, and for several miles above its mouth is navigable. On passing it once, in my way to Althorpe Rectory, and observing a large sloop at anchor between its banks, I traced its course, in fancy, through all its forests, fields, and towns, from the little willow-bridge in my native parish to its estuary, and felt how true were they who likened the life of man to a river, with its early rillings, its after wanderings and struggles, its growing uses, and its final destiny in a life more vast beyond the present.

THE MEDEN.

Beautiful Meden! Beautiful in thy birth, and more beautiful as thou growest older! The Maun and Meden. How like is the sound to Man and Maiden! One might almost fancy that, from thy flowing through sweeter scenes, and from your becoming wed at last to each other, the people of the past gave a feminine name to thee and a masculine one to thy consort, from some poetic sense of fitness and propriety. Yet it was not so: for thy name has its origin, like that of the Medway and many other lovely waters, from thy course being chiefly through meadowy lands,—through *meadh* or *math*,—or what children call mowing-grass.

From many quiet and flowery hollows around Skegby Hall.—a pleasant rural seat associated with the name of Dodsley,—the Meden glides between banks that grow more and more picturesque, until they become quite romantic, in Pleasley Dale. Here, swelling out into reservoirs for the working of some cotton factories, it forms mirror after mirror, in which are beautifully reflected the surrounding rocks and woods, and the over-arching sky; or, (if it be on a winter's evening,) hundreds of lights streaming through the factory-windows,—giving a strangely mixed character to scenes so retired. At length, bursting again from these rocky confines, it flows away through expanding meadows, woods, and parks, until, enlarged by several tributaries, and winding with peculiar gracefulness and peace by the farm of Gleadthorpe and the hamlet of

Budby, it spreads into a broad, bright lake, in the forest domain of Thoresby. After lending, awhile, additional beauty to that sylvan region, and receiving the Poulter from Langwith and Clumber, it weds the Maun, as we have already seen,—their currents uniting somewhere between Ollerton and Retford, among the rich orchards and hop-yards for which that district is famed.

THE EREWASH.

How different from the last is the character of the Erewash! Rising near the foot of Cocksmoor by Kirkby Hardwick, and increased by a number of little tributaries from Kirkby Rectory grounds and the Grives, it hurries away at once into a region of collieries and iron-works; becomes industrious in turning mills and feeding canals, within a few miles of its very outset; keeps company with railways, and pays compliments to steam-engines, throughout its entire course; lingers little with old castles or mansions, though turning again to take a hasty glance at them, now and then; transacts official business as a boundary-line between the two counties of Nottingham and Derby; and finally drops into the Trent at Attenborough, with the air of having done its duty like a workman.

Yet are there spots, here and there, where even the Erewash has its quiet retiring nooks, or its more commanding objects; and many more, within a short distance of the line it draws through the landscape, that

would well repay a glance. The little rocky and woody wilderness of Grives,—Kirkby and Kirkby Woodhouse, crowning opposite hills,—the one with its tapering spire, the other with its clustering roofs,—and each sending down its pleasant green slope to the stream;—Langton, with its neat white mansion and its fringe of dark trees;—the many-gabled old hall of Kirkby, with a fair glimpse of Brookhill beyond;—the towers of Selston and Pinxton, of Heanor and Ilkeston;—the ruins of Codnor Castle;—the wooded hills of Bramcote, with the old druidical stone between;—and the more rural aspect of all things, as we gradually near the Trent and cast an eye beyond it. These, with many other features, not the less engaging because we have to leave them nameless, are thine, useful Erewash; and all of them derive some advantage from their neighbourhood to thee. For, truly, John Edwards was right, when he said,—

"Thou eldest of the elements which sprang
From underneath the Spirit's brooding wings,
When Chaos heard that potent voice which rang,
Commanding life and being to all things,—
Hail WATER!—beautiful thy gushing springs,
Thy lakes and rivers;—shrined in clouds or dew,
In ice or snow; or where the rainbow flings
Its radiant arch;—in every form and hue,
Thou glorious element, art ever fair and new!"

Chapter Seventh.

KIRKBY HARDWICK.

NOW, it is just where two of those streamlets—one feeding the Maun, the other the Erewash—flow in opposite directions from the same spot, that yon ancient buildings, already pointed out as the lesser Hardwick, are seen by the railway side; and this may perhaps be as fitting a place as any in which to tell you their history.

It was in days when the monks of Newstead, or of Felley, waxed so rich as to have possessions in every direction, that it was thought expedient to establish a herd-wick, or place for the herd, on these lands. Hence the origin of the name, as now pronounced, —Hardwick;* and thus it was that some gnarled and antlered trees made way for a mansion and chapel, built and adorned according to the taste of the times; whilst the heretofore wild and open plain between

* The inhabitants of the neighbourhood call it Low Hardwick, and the Duke of Devonshire's palace of the same name High Hardwick, for the sake of distinction.

Kirkby and Sutton was hedged into fields, and the little boggy and rushy mere deepened into a fish-pond, for supplying the good monks with their requisite fry in Lent.

I have been too long habituated to a simpler form of the Christian faith, to wish for a return of those dim old days when the multitude, under their monastic guides, relied so implicitly, as we are told they did, on the efficacy of confession and bodily penance for salvation. Yet I cannot think of the pastoral lives of these men, and of their offices amongst the surrounding peasantry, without very kindly emotions. If local traditions be true, they must, in their generation, have been very benevolent and useful people, dispensing liberally among the poor the contributions of their rich neighbours. It is even said, that some of the converging foot-paths from the places around, were originally trodden into existence by the feet of daily pilgrims to the hospitium of Hardwick, rather than to its shrine: and the custom of those who tenanted it, down to a recent period, is a corroboration of the idea; for in all seasons of extreme distress, the poor have gone thither, as if instinctively, for relief, rather than to many equally wealthy houses in the neighbourhood. Indeed, in my own time, during one severe winter, when scarcity of work had driven the neighbouring stocking-makers to severe privations, the late Mr. Thomas Clark had the old oven there heated twice a-day, to bake bread for their relief. But let us not digress.

Years passed away—generation followed generation—but few events of much moment happened at the

Hardwick, saving when (as did Cardinal Wolsey) some passing traveller of distinction would make it his home for the night. At length, that decree of the capricious Eighth Henry rang through the land, by which the dissolution of every priory and its dependencies was proclaimed; and this place, after being dismantled, and having its chapel partly destroyed, became the residence of a private person.

Three-fourths of a century, after that, had passed away, and the daisies of Kirkby church-yard were growing over the dust of its first and second secular tenants. The painted glass of its chapel windows hung in shattered fragments about their mullioned frames. The mutilated images of a number of saints lay scattered over its courts in garbs of grey and yellow moss. On the floor, inside, lay a dilapidated altar, with the crucifix which had formerly surmounted it, in a dusty heap,—those who had destroyed, deeming them too unholy afterwards for their pious handling; and few having had the boldness, in subsequent times, to enter a place so guarded by its own gloom, or the gloomy legends of which it was the scene. The ivy had crept through several crannies in its damp green walls; and the habitations of the raven, owl, and bat, were there. In short, the doom of what was once honoured as a sanctuary, was now inscribed upon its remains, in every character of devastation and neglect; when towards the evening of one gusty and cloudy day in early spring, some inmates of the renovated mansion hard by were astonished, on stepping out, by the appearance of a strange and venerable man, bareheaded and on his

knees, peering through the key-hole of the old chapel door.

Awed, if not terrified, by so unusual an apparition, they hastened to alarm their master; who, whilst they in the house magnified the affair to the utter bewilderment of each other, went out himself to see the stranger, and learn the object of his visit. He had no sooner passed the threshold, however, than the visitor approached and saluted him, in trembling and half-imploring accents. He was a tall, dignified, patriarchal figure, whose few remaining flakes of hair seemed to have purchased their whiteness from the snows of a hundred winters. He was clad in a simple but somewhat graceful mantle; and with one hand buried in the folds that covered his breast, he rested the other upon a long, black, polished staff.

The two had a lengthy and somewhat secret conversation; and a servant who watched them said, that he saw his master several times pass the back of his hand over his eyes, and dash away the tears. At length, fetching a key, that had hung undisturbed in a corner of the hall so long that few of the family knew its use, they unlocked the chapel door and entered together. After staying there a short time, the master of Hardwick left the stranger to himself; and summoning all the household into his presence, addressed them in words which, to the present time, have been carefully preserved in the memory of the neighbourhood. "I charge you (said he) that as often as you see the old man who has visited us, you shall treat him kindly; but ask him no questions, neither annoy him with

observations of your own. When he is here, never hinder him from going wheresoever he will; and if he asketh food, let him have it, at free cost if he will; yet if he will pay, refuse not his money."

Through that spring and the succeeding summer, did the venerable and mysterious stranger visit the ruined chapel—always alone—and on every occasion stayed about an hour. Some one who had the curiosity and temerity once to steal a peep at him, through a crevice, saw him prostrated in fervent devotion before the broken crucifix, which he had contrived again to place in its old position above the altar, from the remains of which he had also cleared the dust and rubbish. Regularly before his departure, he made a repast of bread and milk, in the hall, and always paid his own price for it;—the good people in this, as in all other respects, observing scrupulously the injunctions of their master, and never, beyond a muttered blessing, or thanks, receiving a word from their guest.

But, just as the last solitary gleaner bent her silent way from the autumn stubble-field, and left it to the quiet range of the sportsman,—when the heath on Cocksmoor lost its purple, and the woods from Grives to Greenhill clothed themselves in mantles of russet and gold,—then it was the patriarch made his last visit to a spot so evidently dear to him. On one occasion, it was remarked that he stayed much longer at his devotions, and left them with a slower and feebler step; and when the following week brought round its wonted day, he came not with it—for his last visit was past! Long did the domestics, who had weekly helped

him to his simple fare, and whose awe of him had begun to subside into reverence and love, speculate upon his origin, history, and fate; but more of him than I have told you they never knew.

My own conjecture is, that in his early days he had been initiated into the brotherhood to which the place originally belonged; and that in the long interval between its destruction and his return, he had wandered abroad, or led the life of a recluse in the neighbouring forest; till feeling his end drawing nigh, and overcome in the solemn close of life by the recollection of his youthful devotions here—perhaps also with some affection for the memory of his departed freres—his heart so clove to the spot, that he determined, in spite of the penal enactments against a profession of the Romish faith or a practice of its rites, once more to visit it and confide his sympathies to the generous owner.

Saving what is incorporated with the present mansion of Kirkby Hardwick, all that remains of the old building now forms little beyond the mere "wreck of a ruin." Yet from its interest as a chronicle of days long past—as a pensive memorial of the events I have noted—how did it charm me, when a youth, to visit it with some kindred spirit, in the dim hour of twilight,—or when the moon-beams slept upon its loose weedy walls, or played among the branches of its overhanging trees,—fondly cherishing its story in my heart! I have since seen Hampton Court, with all its remains of pride. How many fears and heart-aches that palace cost its builder, Wolsey, ere policy bade him resign it into the hands of his jealous master, we cannot perhaps

imagine. But this we know—that a night or two before his death, he staid, a pained and weary traveller, at this secluded and comparatively humble house; and who can tell how much its homely hospitality and tranquillity had to do, in suggesting that notable warning, given a few hours afterwards, to the courtiers of future time:—"Had I but served my God as diligently as I have served the king, he would not thus have given me over in my grey hairs!"

Chapter Eighth.

MY UNCLE TIMOTHY.

ANOTHER little local sketch, ere we leave the top of Cocksmoor. Some of the happiest days of my childhood were spent in an old farm-house, at the point where our town-street became lost in the forest-lane. It was a somewhat large house, taking up one side of an ample fold-yard; the other three sides of which were occupied by barns, granaries, stables, cow-houses, and wagon sheds,—great, grey, irregular buildings, the thatch of which was quite black, and the timbers decaying with age. Some tall, dark pines, and broad chesnut trees, grew on the opposite side of the lane, causing such a roaring sound when the wind was high, and in my childish mind becoming so associated with storms, as to make me think they were the authors of all tempestuous weather, instead of—as they really were—our shields against it. In the other direction, were a large garden, stack-yard, and orchard; and, beyond these, a croft extending to "The Hall Woods," and to another field called "Woodman Dale," skirted by

"Gipsy Lane." Further still were meadows; and, in the farthest distance, the hamlet of Forest-side, and a mansion called Dalestorth. To me, that landscape was a very large one then; but since I have been familiar with such prospects as those from Helvellyn, Lincoln Minster, and Stirling Castle, it seems one of the most diminutive in the world, and the more dear to me, perhaps, for becoming a mere vignette.

Well, I cannot tell you all about my young-hearted old grandmother, who remembered "the rebels coming to Derby;" my orphan cousin Harriet, who could not remember her own mother; and Dick Johnson the herd-boy, who made whips for me of hazel-sticks and rushes; "Clumber Hannah," the kind-hearted dairy-maid, who made me her especial pet on all occasions; Haslam's children from the toll-bar below, and Clark and Ted Morris from the next farm-house above, who used to come and play with me on Saturday afternoons; nor old John Gregory the postman, who blew his horn at the wrong end to frighten me, till Clumber Hannah ran to hide me from him under her apron; nor Sam Price, who broke my nose with a "duck stone;" nor poor Bill Robinson, a good-natured lad, who, when he grew up, got somehow enlisted for a soldier, and was killed in the wars; nor Jim Spencer the parish prentice, who by good conduct became, in time, a respectable and trusty man. Nor may I even mention here a hundred other touches of interest in and around that dear old farm-house. But I must tell you about my Uncle Timothy, who inherited it and the acres belonging to it, (as well as some enclosures from the forest,)

and who most properly represented his fathers in a portly body of at least twenty stones avoirdupoise, with a very shrewd head, and a sound, warm heart.

He was a man who, at market, wore a clean full-length smock-frock; a shirt-neck, white as a rim of snow, lying back over a red silk kerchief; and a very broad-brimmed, low-crowned hat, turned up behind by the hand of Time; while bright steel buckles, as large as a child's hand, at once clasped and ornamented his wonderfully wide shoes. He spoke but seldom, and then chiefly in jokes and parables, but always to the point,—for there was a spice of wisdom in his very nonsense. In the "old house at home," he sat by the hearth in an old arm-chair; whilst everything was done by his mother and the old servants, in the good olden style. Indeed, all there was as quaint and regular as the slow, loud-ticking clock, whose venerable face was watched continually by the unblinking eyes of a large buck's head, appended to the wall on the opposite side of the room. A fine picture of bygone times, doubly dear to and distinct in my crowded memory, is that ample room, where in childhood I climbed my Uncle Timothy's knee, and patted his broad kindly face, and plaited his hair till he fell asleep, in the light of a blazing, roaring fire, on a winter's evening!

Although a bachelor, never was there a more fatherly man than my uncle. He treated everybody and everything, on his arable and pasture farm of a hundred and fifty acres, with paternal kindness. He always ate of the same dishes with the servants at table, and drank malt-beer with them afterwards, and when he engaged

fresh ones, at the annual hiring statutes of the neighbouring town, he stipulated with them that, should they ever be detected in abusing any of the cattle, even by harsh language, they should be dismissed from his employment at once and forever. The natural consequence was, that everything about him loved and respected him, from the matted and bob-tailed shepherd's dog, and the kade lamb that frisked about the yard and the orchard, up to his prime minister, John Marriott, who had been his labourer for half a century.

He was a man of little or no education, yet a profound natural philosopher. He never murmured when the weather was spoiling his crops, but gently rebuked his servants for doing so; such was his fortitude, and so implicit his resignation to the behests of Providence. He had a remarkable love of truth, although his reprehension of a liar was as gentle as it was pungent:—"You may say what you like about it, friend; but, if it's of no great consequence to you, I'd *rayther* not believe it." He once went to London, and was looking into a shop window, in one of the great thoroughfares, when out came a shopman, and invited him to step in. "What do you want me for?" quietly asked Uncle Timothy. "Oh! just to buy some of our very cheap articles,—cheaper than prime cost," was his ready reply; and in went Uncle Timothy after him. "Well, what do you sell in my way, young gentleman? let's be hearing." "Oh, everything, sir; anything, sir; we've prime goods of all kinds, sir; what shall I have the pleasure of showing you first?" "A pair of hedging-mittens," drily responded my uncle. "Ah! really, sir, now I come to

think, it's a question whether we have anything of that kind in stock; be pleased to name any other article." "Well, may be you've got some thistle-seed on hand, then; let me have two or three pounds o' that." "Really," exclaimed the Cockney, beginning better to understand his customer, "I am afraid we shall not be able to suit you at all; I never heard of anything of the kind in my life!" "Ay, ay, young fellow, there are many things in my way not to be found in your shop, and little you have that would be useful at all"—quietly saying which, he took his leave.

Another instance of his practical humour was, his rebuke of a man who came, night after night, to steal coals. On one occasion, he detected the thief with a great lump of coal, on the top of a high wall, which he had scaled in the starlight, preparatory to making off. Catching him suddenly, and holding him tight by the leg, he exclaimed; "Stop, stop, Jack! Before you go any farther with that coal, you may as well take the trouble to explain what greater right you have to it than I have." It is needless to say, that the depredator was glad to throw the coal back, and make his escape. Once, at a fair, detecting the hand of a thief in his pocket, and having a most powerful grasp, he held it there for some time, whilst walking in the crowd, much to the general amusement, until, thinking he had punished his prisoner sufficiently by this mode of exposure, he warned him to beware how he "trespassed again in such dangerous places;" and, with other good advice of the same kind, set him at liberty.

But we have now to change a little the scene of his droll but kindly habits; and that is one reason why I have chosen to tell you his history while we yet linger on Cocksmoor. His good old mother had died at the age of four score; his foster-child, my poor cousin Harriet, had, from some cause, gone broken-hearted to an early grave; and, one stormy night, nearly the whole of those ricketty farm-buildings, at the town end, had been blown down in a mass, with the cattle beneath them. Thanks, however, to Providence, and the great wooden rafters on which the roofs still rested after their fall, the cattle, with scarcely an exception, remained uninjured.

It was now resolved to give up the old homestead altogether, and build another in the forest enclosures, at the foot of Cocksmoor. Look back and see it, with its new-looking stone walls and red-tiled roofs,—that place we passed on coming up from the railway,—Roundhill Farm. And here his life became even yet more primitive and simple. He was very seldom known to drink wine or spirits, though he had no objection to a cup of home-brewed beer; and, in eating, his greatest luxury was buttered toast. His visits to fairs and markets gradually ceased; and, at the age of three-score and ten, he died one night, in bed, as quietly as he had lived, without disturbing anybody; and his funeral, which took place on a Sunday, was in perfect keeping with the character of his life and death. He had many relations,—not less than half-a-dozen of whom where named after him, in compliment to his virtues, which were felt, if not talked of, by all who

knew him,—and these, with many neighbours, gathered around the solitary homestead from far and near; and his cattle seemed to draw nigh, too, with a slower tread and more downcast looks, on that mournful occasion. It was a calm, soft, sunny, springtide evening; and from the spire, that peeped over the trees more than a mile off, came the mellowed and deepened tones of the funeral bell, as his unlettered coffin was moved from the room he had died in to his own old wagon. To it were harnessed four of his favourite horses; and so patient and melancholy seemed their mood, it almost made one think they understood the nature of this last sad service to their master and friend. The procession of mourners then formed behind, in double column—a long, long train,—as Tom Sadler, one of the servants, with measured tread, led on the slow team through the green lanes and village street, to the ancient churchyard; and whilst the clergyman and sexton chanted the solemn service over his grave, hundreds of the inhabitants, standing by, breathed kindly of his failings, whilst they reverenced his virtues, and offered up their last prayer for the peace of his departed spirit.

Surely, there never lived a more unsophisticated being than this scholar of Nature; yet his memory is embalmed in our rural classics,—his jokes are still current in all the region of Sherwood Forest; and many a farmer, by the cheerful fire, when the labours of the day are ended, amuses and instructs his admiring domestics, with the sayings and doings of MY UNCLE TIMOTHY.

Chapter Ninth.

ROADS OF ALL SORTS.

IN the days of my grandfather, a person might have travelled nearly all the way from Ollerton to Nottingham, (twenty miles,) through a forest of gnarled oaks. It was, no doubt, a strange old-world scene then, somewhat like Birkland or Bilhagh at the present day, only still haunted by wild deer and homeless robbers, one of whom was killed, "in single combat," by a soldier, in the neighbourhood of Blidworth,—as is recorded in the parish register of that village. Instead of gliding over macadamised roads, as afterwards, every vehicle had to find or make the best track it could, through the ling and turf, into which, spite of all precaution, it would often sink to the axles, and there remain the whole day, or even all night, waiting for a fresh one coming up, that the two teams might help each other!

In my father's time, the only carrier from Sutton-in-Ashfield, Samuel Barnes, started with his wagon regularly at twelve o'clock on a Friday night; reached Nottingham (only fourteen or fifteen miles off) by nine

the next morning; transacted his business there, started back at three, and reached home again at midnight on Saturday; unless there happened to be a snow-storm, when he would have to weather it all night, and sometimes till a very late hour the following day. At that time a *fast* coach, called the *Fly*, from the north to London, crossed Sherwood Forest at the rate of three or four miles an hour,—to travelling by which, men who were in a hurry would frequently prefer walking.

In my own brief time, (within five-and-thirty years or so,) the most rapid conveyance from Sutton, Ralph Wass's wagon, was often seven or eight hours on the road; and once, in coming back, was stopped by robbers, between the Hut and Cocksmoor. At present, the whole distance to London (140 miles) is accomplished in the same period daily by railway, and that to Nottingham in much less than an hour!

See! here comes up the train from Mansfield, while we are talking about it, trailing its graceful wreaths of white vapour along the landscape, and awaking series after series of far echoes by its "whistle!" It has crossed the bridge at Kingsmill—it has taken up all the bags of hose and bag-hosiers at Sutton station; and now it passes Kirkby Hardwick and Nuncar Gate; threads the short tunnel under Robin Hood's Hills; bursts thence on the wild park and woodland scenery of Annesley and Newstead; gives the passengers a glimpse of Linby and Hucknall-Torkard churches, with Papplewick, Sherwood Lodge, and Beskwood Hills in the offing; forms a short companionship with the winding Leen at Bulwell; and, making through Basford,

Radford, and Lenton, with only a brief complimentary call at each, has come to a stand at the foot of Nottingham Castle-rock, almost ere we have had time to sketch out so hasty a map of its course. And, after completing all their business, those bag-hosiers will be back at Sutton to a mid-day dinner! Strange alterations, these, since the stocking makers went far out into the forest, in the still and chilly night, to be assured by the distant crack of the carrier's whip, and the grumbling of his wagon-wheels as they crushed deep into the gravelly road, that his lateness was not owing to any serious disaster, and that he was bringing their weekly pittance, from the hosiers, safely home!

To Nottingham I must have gone, myself, by almost every possible route,—first, by the canal, winding away from Pinxton through Codnor Park, past Ilkeston, Bramcote Hills, and the rich scenes around Wollaton Hall, in the spring of the year and my boyhood,—when every object, no matter how common-place to others, had the charm of novelty for me. And there was then all the charm of adventure as well as of novelty; for, in common phraseology, I had "run away" from my home; had passed the night in the cabin of a boat that lay in a lock, into which the water came rushing and roaring with the noise of a mill-force; had afterwards glided on for miles before sunrise, which at length seemed to have taken place in the *west* instead of the *east*, from my losing the points of the compass through the curious windings of our course. And when at last the town burst on my sight, with all its towers and spires, and obelisk-like chimney stalks, it was over-

gazing a flood of the Trent, that lay like a vast sunny lake upon the plain; with the church and trees and sheltered homes of Wilford, as of a bowery isle, arising from the midst of it!

But I did not go into Nottingham then,—repentance having come upon me for leaving my parents, and not letting me rest until I had again reached home, which was done by walking back, in the night, among all those lurid scenes of flame, and those mysterious noises, occasioned by the vast furnaces, iron forges, coal pits, and coke kilns of the Erewash Valley; and to which the still gloom of Brookhill Woods afforded a singular contrast at last, as I came plodding through them at midnight, when no sound could be heard but the baying of a dog at the Hall, the striking of the turret clock, and the fluttering of a bird in the trees, disturbed by my latesome and lonely step! Stay—there was one sound more—the knocking of my own boyish heart, as I became struck with a sense of my solitude and the darkness, and wondered what my sorrowing parents were thinking of my absence. But that was a way of going to and coming from Nottingham, of which no other pedestrian will ever be likely to make choice.

My next journey to Nottingham—and this, again, was on another and more successful attempt to "run away"—was upon a cold, silent, January evening, just in the twilight. Leaping the garden-hedge of my native cottage, at the age of sixteen, with a single change of linen, a small bundle of books, and fourteen-pence-halfpenny in cash, I hurried from the town, over

the Hardwick fields, to the Lingside-road, where it skirted Roundhill Farm, determined now to seek and fulfil my destiny in the world. A burning thirst for knowledge, and eagerness for a wider sphere in which to exercise it, had once more, and finally, caused me to escape the bounds of my paternal—my still-loved—my ever-loved home! Blessings—eternal blessings—be on its memory, and on that of all who have belonged or may ever belong to or smile upon it!

The first point to which I made was a hollow oak, on the Ling-side, called Wheatley's Warehouse, from its once having been used as a sort of hiding store by a person of that name. Here I was going to leap over the hedge, and down a steep bank, to the footpath, when, who should I see standing upon it but my uncle Timothy, with his shepherd dog, Rover! My business now was to squat quietly down behind the hedge and endeavour to keep still, though with a throbbing bosom; for I was much afraid that Rover, who knew me well, would be finding me out, and putting a premature end to my expedition. He moved off, however, with his master, of whose white smock-frock, after long waiting, I at length had the last glimpse in the dusk, as he reached his farm-yard; and then away I made again, as fast as legs would carry me, to the top of Cocksmoor.

Here, for a moment, I paused and rested. All was still, and grey, and growing dark, in the direction of the forest. On the other side, the only sound was that peculiar hollow one made by skating and sliding on the ice, and which came up from my late playfellows who were sporting, a mile off, on the large mill-dam, by

the old Bath Wood. In the west was one gleam of light yet lingering upon the horizon; and through this, thus made more plainly visible, struck up my native spire. The whole scene, time, everything, seemed to bid me farewell, and I felt it. A thrill, a tear, a struggle, a resolve, and I at length turned my face to the forest, fearful of meeting, in every bush, some person who might know me and take me back to my parents, or tell them of the direction in which I had gone. Thieves' Wood was soon behind me, and, on escaping its darkness, the lamp at a distant toll-gate became my guiding star, on reaching which, upon the main turnpike-road, I found a stage-wagon passing, and made a companion of the wagoner. The Hut Inn, the Seven Mile Ginger-Beer House, with some young plantations and a wide common between; Sherwood Lodge, and Red Hill. Such places need no description: you know them by their names. The moon had begun to shine by the time we reached any of them; and entertaining the wagoner with my simple questions, as he did me with his civil answers, the way was beguiled till we found ourselves in Nottingham, about nine o'clock.

"Going through the towns," was once, with some people, a favourite way to Nottingham. This was by passing from Sutton through Kirkby village; then taking the road by the old water-mill, and striking through the little upland hamlets of Kirby Woodhouse and Annesley Woodhouse, to Annesley Park. Every reader of English literature knows all about Annesley, —how it was the inheritance of Mary Anne Chaworth,

"Byron's Mary," and how it was of a spot near this place he spoke, in his "Dream," when he said—

> "I saw two beings in the hues of youth
> Standing upon a hill, a gentle hill,
> Green and of mild declivity, the last
> As 'twere the cape of a long ridge of such,
> Save that it had no sea to lave its base,
> But a most living landscape, and the wave
> Of woods and cornfields, and the abodes of men
> Scatter'd at intervals, and wreathing smoke
> Arising from such rustic roofs;—the hill
> Was crown'd with a peculiar diadem
> Of trees, in circular array, so fix'd,
> Not by the sport of nature, but of man.
> The two, a maiden and a youth, were there
> Gazing—the one that was on all beneath
> Fair as herself—but the boy gazed on her.
> And both were young, and one was beautiful:
> And both were young, yet not alike in youth.
> As the sweet morn on the horizon's verge,
> The maid was on the eve of womanhood;
> The boy had fewer summers, but his heart
> Had far outgrown his years, and to his eye
> There was but one beloved face on earth,
> And that was shining on him."

Everybody knows, too, from William Howitt and Washington Irving, sufficient of Annesley Hall, its woods, and the sports and disports of time and the hand of man with its scenes, without a repetition of the history now. Village there is none left gathering about the altered mansion and grey church; but the wooded deer park, crossed by the public road, still spreads away in the old forest fashion, over the hills towards Newstead, and over the plain towards Hucknall and "the towns," already named as those through which wind the Leen, the railway, and the ancient road.

There was a fine variation from this for those who liked a lonelier and wilder route, by striking off from Kirkby to the left, over the Grives. Now it seems to me that even the word Grives, rightly understood, conveys a picture. It is probably from the same root as the word *greave*—a rocky, woody, and watery RIFT or hollow—as *Youl-greave*, in the Peak of Derbyshire. The word *grip*—as in *Markland Grips*—is from the same, and indicates a similar scene. In Durham and Northumberland, such places are called *denes* and *burns*, and sometimes *hopes* or *opes*. *Burn-greave-wood*, a place near Sheffield, embodies two of the above words at once in its name. They are none of them so precipitous as the *cloughs* of Derbyshire or the *ghylls* of Westmoreland, because the country in which they occur is not so mountainous; but they are often more expanded and varied if less rugged, and always very pleasant from their harmonious blending of little crags and bushes and tiny streams, and the quiet covert they afford for singing and building birds. Well, just such a place, although close to a railway side, is Kirkby Grives; and through it, and by an old farm-yard, ran a foot-road to Shoulder-o'-Mutton Hill—one of Robin Hood's Hill's, so-called from the shape it bore as seen from a distance. Under this hill, now, runs the railway tunnel; but a few years back, ere that railway was begun, the scene south eastward from this point was of a most striking character. To look into it was like looking far down into the vale of Antiquity; and no wonder; for it embraced some of the best features—woods, waters, warrens, towers, and turrets—of the valley of Newstead

This road, for those who had the gift of finding and following it out, led at length, over an old lake head, and by some houses cut in the rock, to the western front of Newstead Abbey—converging there with another footpath that came from the lane between Thieves' Wood and the Hut Toll-Bar. And from their junction, again, was a second choice of courses—either to leave the Abbey, gardens, and lower lakes, on the right, and so follow a high dry road to Papplewick Hall; or to keep them on the left, and winding through the woods, with a dozen little streams coming one after another to join you for company, get by the foot of the lawn, and up through the sweetest and most retired of all church-yards in the world, into Papplewick village, and thence over Bulwell-forest to Nottingham.

This last, when I became a resident in the town, was my favourite way of returning, on those Sundays after which I had gone, by the Saturday evening carrier, to see my parents. How sweetly falls back the memory upon one of those occasions now! Those labyrinthine wood-walks, by forsaken quarries; by hidden pools, the retreats of shy waterfowl; then by some lone keeper's cottage, where no human habitation was expected; and next through the fresh open lawns and meadows, to that church-yard, so blossomy yet pensive—so sadly beautiful! In some of those walks one might see no human being, perhaps, for more than a mile, till coming suddenly on a group of little children playing with flowers upon the grassy graves,—unconsciously mingling life with death,—while, just to finish the picture one aged couple would be making their sabbath

pilgrimage to the same spot, there to linger with the twilight of two lives—the coming and the gone—in their hearts.

Then came the village, linked with the church-yard by a fine avenue of trees; the cottage inmates of all ages loitering at their doors, to breathe the air of their little flower-gardens, to gossip, or to muse, according to their various inclinations. Doubtless the dwellers in such places have much the same woes and cares to bear as other people; yet those were hours in which they seemed to have given them a most complete *forgetting*. For there would be the calm mutterings of age, the titter and, in some cases, the *soft sweet whisper* of youth; and the lisp or laugh of uncaring childhood; but no perceptible mingling of the note of sorrow. And, at last, on passing from beneath the tall trees that overshaded the cottages and guarded the outlet from the lower end of the street, would break upon the eye one of those scenes that admit of nothing superlative in description, because there is nothing extraordinary in their composition; but which have, at such seasons, notwithstanding, a charm most intense for him who can perceive the beauty with which Nature loves to clothe the ordinary.

A little common, upon which, being milking-time, the kine had gathered in groups, with happy girls and boys going or coming away with their pails. High, swelling, and wavy, up to the left,—wild and tufted where it was yet uncultivated,*—stretched Boskwood (anciently *Busk* or *Bush-Wood*) Park, its crowning hill crested

* I speak of twenty years back.

with an old ruined watch-tower. Adown the right flowed the Leen, now hidden, now gleaming, and now flashing out afar into the reservoirs of some disused and forsaken mills, from which spread luxuriant meadows, spreckled over with cottages, farms, villages, churches, and plantations, towards Robin Hood's Hills, which, on that side, were forming a dusky horizon. The view forward was composed of objects as beautiful and various, to the upland ridge that stretches from Watnall to Annesley, hemming in Bulwell Hall and other large and isolated buildings, the distinctive character of which, in that peculiar light and at that distance, no stranger could detect. And here, alonghand, bordering the fresh green pastures, went one of those lovely trails of blossomed hawthorns which Wordsworth calls "sportive lines of wood run wild;" whilst over the whole landscape was poured a flood of golden glory from the west, where the sun still lingered for a parting moment, above the Annesley Hills.

And then, what a rich consciousness of *life* would fill the whole scene! To know that, in its whole scope, not a leaf or blade was uninhabited,—that every atom of verdure, every globe of dew, was peopled with its world of animated creatures,—that

> "Not a beam, nor air, nor leaf was lost,
> But had a part of being, and a sense
> Of that which is of all Creator and Defence;"

In addition to all that, seen and heard, brought rapture to the bosom! How happy seemed the flocks and herds that grazed and ruminated in the lane, the forest, and a hundred fields around; or that came running at

the call of the milkmaid or the herdboy, each to its own! How much of domestic peace and unspeakable affection, told the evening wreaths, curling up from the hearths of scattered farms and cots, silent yet constant, into the viewless ether, as the whispered hopes that rise from faithful hearts to heaven! The old tottering couple in the road, too, who had climbed life's hill together, and were now descending near its foot to rest, had for one moment caught back a gleam and an impulse from their early years, as they tied up, with rushes, the posies gathered by their grandchildren from the banks and low bushes. The bowed stone-breaker smiled at the ordinary scene of his slavery, as he sat down to smoke his pipe by the road-side, on the block which had resounded beneath his hammer during the previous six days; and even the boisterous village lads, returned from their stroll with subdued glee, as if touched by the tenderness and loveliness of that sabbath scene;

> "Whilst the glad thrush and blackbird, far and free,
> Shouted the day's decline from tree to tree."

And now came the moonlight to guide me by the clear natural fountain of Bulwell,* and across Bulwell-forest, through Basford village, over Sherwood Hill,—just in time to hear St. Mary's tower deeply and slowly count out the hour of ten; while all the other clocks in

* From the same root as the French *bouillir*, and the English *boil*,—to boil, to bubble up, to rise in bubbles: this being the way in which Bul-well sends up and forth one of the finest little bleaching streams in the Midland Counties. The popular, and even historical, association of the name of this fine well with a *parish bull*, is as ridiculous as it is vulgar.

the town counted it over again to prove it correct; as dreams through the night would afterwards paint over again the pictures of the day, to leave them more faithfully fixed on the enraptured memory.

Such are, or have been, the highways and bye-ways from Ashfield to Nottingham. In these days of rapid transmutation, there is no guaranteeing that a single feature of the whole district will remain unchanged. The wilderness of one generation is the garden of the next. High places are made low, and rough places plain. Towns extend as woods diminish. Yet, so long as a single touch of nature and the old names are left, a charm for the historian and the poet will linger about them; and even should these verdant old roads become populous streets, those who may dwell in them will better love their homes, for standing where once bloomed the path-side heather and furze of Sherwood Forest.

Chapter Tenth.

NOTTINGHAM—A VIGNETTE.

——— "Old Nottingham, the Land of Lud,
Of lace and stockings, of strong ale and wassail,
Bold hearts, and *once* a venerable Castle."

A VISION of other days is still before me—those hopeful days of my youth; and blithe, from amid the crowd of recollections that compose it, Old Nottingham rises above them all. The little hour I write in seems to comprise long years. Scenes among which those years were whiled away are reduced, by the distance, to a vignette on a map: and the varied feelings and thoughts of the experience they gave are all concentrated in one glowing remembrance! Thou fine old town—thou Nottingham of my youth! how dear in my heart has lived thy miniature, in the midst of many a remote solitude! How can I still count the long row of brilliant lamps that stretched down before me, into the very centre of thy unsleeping throng, as I first entered thee in the night, from the far and lonesome Forest! How spreads out, as I first beheld it, mirroring thee, the lake-like flood on thy broad meadows, in the bosom of which rested green Wilford; Attenborough spire rising further off like a beacon of the sea, and that of

Sawley gleaming up like a rocket on the verge of the far horizon; whilst the classic shore of Clifton swelled duskily up more near,—the Parnassus of thy poets, the haunt of pairing lovers, the fertile garden of old legends, and a favourite shrine of the pilgrims of genius from many a land; as the sun laved all with his mellow light, while calmly retiring from the sky over Bramcote Hills! And do not thy antique towers and thy elegant spires shoot up from the misty mass of habitations into memory's sky, with an interest as clear, if not as thrilling, as when once I was wont to look towards thee from Carlton Fields, or Ruddington Hill? Here glow successively in my mind, as in a living panorama, thy castle-crowned rock, rising majestically from a hundred cotted and grotted gardens, and gazed at from afar by a thousand hills and towers! Thy undulating Park, with its range of merchant-palaces, the fruit of modern commerce, above—and its fringe of Druid rocks, the work of ancient days, below—with sunshine and verdure and life and beauty between! Thy western landscape of lordly halls and nestling villages—and uplands waving with woods, and valleys sparkling with waters—and grey old churches, silent and stedfast links between earth and heaven! Thy southern prospect—in the foreground, so rich and broken and varied; in the midview, presenting such a regular yet enchanting line of rural beauty; and so softly blue beyond, where the sky dips down into Charnwood Forest; while the dim wolds stretch away on either hand—on one side vanishing, as if unawares, into etherial space, and on the other lifting Belvoir Castle into sight at the re-

motest point, fair, though faint, as a fairy hall in the clouds! Again, on the north, thy view towards dusky old Sherwood. The plains of Mapperley—the bleak hills of Beskwood, just growing green by culture;—with Robin Hood's Hills afar beyond, wild and dark as the times in which he roamed about them,—and the sweet, sweet dell of St. Ann at hand, its white cots glimpsing through its thrush-haunted trees, so snugly embosomed between Gorsey Close and Bluebell Hill! All these pass delightfully in review before me, with all their associations of ancient and modern time, historical and poetical—a happy sabbath dream.

And rises not in the mind some sense of the life, as well as the scenery, that surrounds thee, Old Nottingham? Hark! it is Sunday morning—eight o'clock—and the bells of two churches slowly swung, tell each other of the day in tones like *deliberate shouting*, that extend afar over forest and meadow; and Snenton tower calls out its reply in a voice as solemnly measured if not as deep. The sun has already passed over half the length of Cotgrave Wold; and the uncoiled Trent, in Colwick Vale, seems rather to bask than to flow, as it rejoices amid the verdure in its new-caught sheen. The flood, which so recently lay like a still lake on the meadows, has lapsed away; and millions of azure-hued crocuses are spread over its bed; among which are hundreds of children, wild with extacy, as they cull and kiss the flowers in eager sympathy. And now rises the lark, pouring out its rill of song; then joined by another, and another, they conspire to fill the heavens with their melody, and every listener with joy; whilst

each foot-road from the town forms the line of a long procession of toil-freed people, who file off, as they proceed, until the whole country is overscattered with them—

> "Loosed from their weekly prison's stern control,
> Perchance to look abroad on fields and skies,
> Nursing the germs of freedom in the soul!"

On some other side of the town, too, are equal if different signs of happy animation. See where yon gardens with their alcoves cover the southern slope like a patch of fairy-land; each little pile, as it peeps from among the trees, sending its stream of blue film into the still air, far more graceful than the smoke of the town; and mark how many groups—artizans and their children—are wending along the lanes and by the field-paths in the same direction; while, as the morning passes on, other tides of people take a townward instead of a fieldward course, to their several places of devotion. And the poet is wandering forth, perhaps up the Lark-dale, or over the Lammas-fields, to worship at the "shrine not reared by human hands," whilst all he beholds is to him full of blessings; or perhaps he looks down the heathery slope below him on some picturesque gathering of Ranters, as wildly

> "To other words, while forest echoes ring,
> 'Ye banks and braes o'bonny Doon' they sing!"

Yes—something not unlike the foregoing is that vision of other days which passes over my spirit at the recollection of Sunday scenes around Nottingham, and not less vividly are pictured some of those of the week-day.

As hinted before, the first time I entered Nottingham was in an evening and from the Forest, in about the same style that Dick Whittington made his way into London—a rough country lad by the side of a stage waggon; and, as hundreds of lights were glowing down behind me at Ison Green, while Mansfield Road was lit up by its beautiful row of lamps before me; when the loud hum of the town broke on my ear, at the same instant that those lamps caught my eye, the effect was almost magical; and it was only natural if one who had been brought up in the quiet of the country, as I had, supposed it to be an extraordinary general illumination.

A faithful transcript of a country-man's impressions on first advancing into a great old town is, under any circumstances, interesting. To the inhabitants it shows the novel effect upon him of things to them most common-place; whilst to his neighbours who never go themselves, its opening of scenes so counter to their daily experience cannot be unwelcome; and a third party—those who have dashed for a time into its life and bustle, joined in its ways, and mingled up their sympathies with those of its denizens, afterwards to muse on them at a distance, as I do here—will feel no unwilling companionship with one who may chance to wake up a few old associations, not the less dear to them because somewhat trite.

Imagine then my entrance into Nottingham, at a time ere the lace trade had become worse than worthless to those that had first embarked in it, and when a waggon had almost to be squeezed through Milton-street into Clumber-street, because the passage was so narrow and

so crowded. Imagine the buz and bustle, the rattling of carriage wheels, the twang of horns, the glare of the large shop windows, the hurrying and jostling of foot-passengers, and the babel of street-cries, which in that memorable era of prosperity and stage coaches, burst upon the bewildered senses on just merging from the outer to the inner side, where the two Parliament-streets poured their subsidies into the main trunk of the town, then on the chief line of communication between London and Leeds. All this, to one who had scarcely passed a night from home even in an ordinary market town, had something most novel, almost astounding about it. Keeping a close eye, however, on the waggon, which had so far been my guide, and guessing it would probably halt at the door of a decent inn, I made the passage with it round the corner into the Market-place, there to be more astonished and bewildered than ever. The buildings round that immense space, said to be the largest market-place in the country, average a story higher than those of most other similar sized English towns; and, therefore, in the upward-thrown lights, to my young eye, hitherto accustomed chiefly to houses of one, two, and three stories, appeared stupendous. The piazzas all around, with the lights from the richly set-out shop windows streaming through them, presented an appearance I had never expected to see, unless fortune should lead me to some of the gorgeous cities of other climes, of which I had read. The crowds of passengers and loiterers on the foot-way, the passing and re-passing of carriages across the area, the arrival of coaches from all points, and the striking of the

Exchange clock, mingled up with a vociferous proclamation of "Mussels alive, alive O!" from the fish-stalls, and the sound so dear to penny-tossing truants, from the region round about the pump, of "Pies—all—hot, hot! hot! hot!" all tended so to confound me, that upon the first shock of amazement subsiding, on coming to myself, as Paddy would say, I found myself lost, the waggon being out of sight; and after gazing about a little longer, and trying to analyse the general confusion, I sought for quarters, at the Black Boy Inn, for the night.

But what life have I not observed in Nottingham since that evening! And how different the generality from that specimen! How distinct afterwards, and familiar, became every element of the general confusion that so astounded me at the outset:—the old minstrel singing the simple songs of "his own composing," as he trudged along the pave with a tremulous step; the droll though half-witted "General" marshalling his forces of school-boys for a holiday campaign, or bawling out the "Duke o'York's speech in Parliament," from a *blank* paper, because as he explained it, "the Duke o'York had said nought;" the carter calling out, at the highest pitch, "Coalio, coals!" in tones as dismal as those of a wild man caught in a trap; Old George, the ragman, promising "ducks and green peas to-morrow" for those who would let him have rags and bones to-day; and the passing urchin ludicrously advising him to put himself into his own bag. These, and a thousand other familiar cries and scenes, each trifling in itself, but all helping to compose that grotesque

amount of street-life, so characteristic of a large town, now fall upon the memory and wake a smile. But such are not the recollections on which I love most to dwell. The ingenious, the tender, the beautiful, or sublime—the affectionate, and the heroically good, in public life or in the shades of obscurity—these would be my themes, but that I must away with you again to the Woodland, Field, and Mountain.

Chapter Eleventh.

LANE-SIDE COTTAGES.

TO me, one of the loveliest pictures of rural life is a little cottage by the side of a winding lane. How many such could I call to memory just now—neat, snug, natural-looking objects, that seem not so much to have been built, as to have grown on the spot! Our earliest ideas—caught from many a sweet ballad and fire-side story—of peace, contentment, humble virtue, and modest love—are they not associated with our young-day scenes and readings of cottage life?

The little-sycamore-shaded, orchard-flanked, garden-fronted cottages of my native lanes! Never did fingers tingle more to be writing about anything than mine of these! My very heart must be "photographed" all over with them, (if you can understand such language,) and I am determined again to be youthful, happy, and hopeful, as we wander back amongst them once more, to compare the pictures with the originals.

"But why," ask you, "limit your subject to one county? What difference is there between the cottage

life of Nottinghamshire and that of every other part of England?" More difference than at first you would incline to suppose, without a little observation. I do not say but that there are some features of general resemblance throughout the country—or that there are not districts very wide apart, in which, from natural causes, there may be some general and striking assimilations. But then, as there is probably no part of England where so many vestiges of ancient forest life and scenery remain, over which a manufacturing population has been sprinkled, as in some parts of Nottinghamshire,—as I have not marked any neighbourhood where, to so great an extent, manufactures have been grafted on agriculture without more generally superseding it,—I have been led to observe, with considerable interest, how these circumstances have gradually impressed a character peculiarly local upon the people, their habitations, and recreations.

Let it be remembered that the stocking weaver can ply his clean and ingenious craft remote from the buz and bustle of the town, where no steam-engine from its tall spindling chimney pours along the blue sky its dark flood of smoke,—for steam has never yet been extensively applied to his loom,—so that the Genius of Sherwood Forest has at least been true to herself in this: while enabling William Lee to invent framework-knitting even in her very bowers, she has not permitted his invention to desecrate her beauties. How often have we heard the dreamy whirring of the "jacks," on a warm summer's day, in some remote cottage, perhaps under the wing of a wood, where gilliflowers ran up and

breathed their delicious perfume through the wide-open window; whilst a throstle or a blackbird sang sweetly in the shade hard by, and a colony of bees set examples of industry around their sunward hive,—a little brook running nigh, and telling in light murmurs of coolness and repose when evening should come.

In some parts of the county, where the forest commons have been long enclosed, such ample space has been left for lanes, that many of them have given three-fourths of their breadth back to Nature, who, with her usual economy, has taken care to make the most of the boon; for, whilst the gravelly road runs narrowly along the centre, the space thence up to the hedges abounds in a rugged mingling of gorse and broom and heath and fern, as exuberant as in any part of the untrodden wilderness.

Nothing is more natural than that these lane-side wastes should have occasionally attracted the attention of men given to spade-thrift—that useful and honourable class who love to live by their own labour, in an independent way, and who sometimes emigrate for the gratification of such a disposition, leaving many not half so valuable behind them to the care of the country. You may sometimes stroll along one of these lanes for hours, as solitary as you could linger in the deepest recesses of a wood. Except for the bit of gravel-road mentioned before, you would feel yourself shut out from all communion with man or his works, and might saunter on, dreaming of the days of Robin Hood and Little John until you almost felt contemporary with them. A week or two elapses, and you take the same

route again, when, reaching some very out-of-the-way spot—chosen, perhaps, because the lane chances there to be widest—perhaps because there is water nigh—you find a rood or two of gorse uprooted and laid in heaps; a bank thrown up parallel with the field-fence beyond; and stakes driven in, preparatory to the complete separation of the new clearing from the road. The next time you go, a hedge has been made of the gorse; the fern and other rubbish has been burnt; and the inclosure has assumed an appearance between that of a field and a garden: and such perhaps it retains for one or two years. During that period, however, there has been a gradual accumulation of timber, bricks, and other material, portending a still bolder stroke on the part of the adventurer, who is probably a framework-knitter or day-labourer in some distant village; and then speedily a little cottage, rude or refined in its style, according to the skill of its builder, or his means of commanding materials or assistance, rears its humble head. The reek now curls up from its clumpy chimney; garden flowers begin to bloom before the door, as the ivy trails its tendrils up the gable; fruit-trees have superseded the gorse and ling; the sounds of industry are heard within, and the mirth of children without; whilst you marvel at the ease with which desolation has been vanquished by a little enterprise, on the part of one who has never, perhaps, been distinguished amongst his neighbours for more power or ingenuity than they all supposed themselves to possess.

Scattered far and wide over Sherwood Forest are many little rural paradises, which must have thus

originated. In many instances their tenants have obtained a few older cultivated acres, in addition to their enclosures from the waste; and such form by far the happiest portion of the people. Some pass the greatest part of their time in weaving stockings, and devote a day or two in the week (which others are compelled perhaps to idle away) to the cultivation of their land: so that, in times of depression, they have a resource unknown to their unfortunate congeners in the towns, who, as they wander forth into the country and view such scenes, often turn their thoughts on their own privations in sadness and despair.

The cottage life of such a district might form a theme as endless as it would be agreeable; but since it is impossible to dwell minutely on all its varieties, I will, on taking leave of the subject, relate one of the most curious and successful examples occurring at present to my recollection. Nearly sixty years since, a diminutive young man, who had become deformed in consequence of a kick upon his chest by a horse, made his way from one of the agricultural districts of Yorkshire to the western border of our Forest, where he learnt the art and mystery of stocking-weaving. Up to that time he had been accustomed, except during a few months passed "on trial" with a shoe-maker, to rural pursuits; and had not only acquired a knowledge of farming, but of the construction of farming implements, to the latter of which he had given most of his leisure time. He was very soon equally proficient in the stocking frame; and marrying a strong lass in the same line of life, they settled in a cottage about a mile from

Sutton, in which they lived twenty-six years, and trained up thirteen children. During this long period, our hero, without the slightest tuition—his knowledge being derived more from his observation of the work of others when done, than of their mode of doing it—had accustomed himself, when not employed as a stockinger or day-labourer, to the making of every description of agricultural implements—carts, harness and ploughs included; as well as the wood-work of stocking-frames, household furniture, ornaments, toys, and musical instruments; completing everything in a style that astonished his neighbours, and sometimes even himself, the more so as he worked with but few tools that were not of his own contriving. He was also noted for the superior management of his garden, to which he had made considerable additions from the waste on the turnpike-side. Nor was his wife less thrifty than himself, her occupation being thus emblazoned in a couplet on the window-shutter:—

"Gingerbread, ginger-beer,
Buns and peppermint sold here."

At length, however, came to them one of those mysterious dispensations of Providence which often hide, under cover of present evil, a future and greater good. One fine evening in the June of 1830, owing to some dispute with his landlord, the old man suddenly broke up his home, and emigrated, with such of his family as still clung around him, to one of the lonesome lanes I have described before. It was indeed one of those strange old "roads to nowhere," far more accustomed to the grazing of sheep than to traffic, and the spot now

pitched upon was said by tradition to be precisely that on which the Miller of Mansfield arrested King Henry II., whilst hunting, mistaking his majesty for a purloiner of the royal game.

Squatting down on the green turf, after the manner of all "back settlers," the day was fast waning ere the little encampment of our adventurers was completed—the bed of the "parent pair" being laid on an old door, and balanced across a wheelbarrow, with those of the youngsters spread around it. A simple meal was then partaken, during which the sun set in full glory over the western uplands, flinging through the sky its deep golden tinges to the very zenith, and diffusing a mellower hue over the surrounding woods and fields; whilst the murmurs of distant waters came rolling up the dale, blending harmoniously with the evening anthem of countless birds, and inspiring those deep and tender sensations experienced alone by the dwellers in solitudes. But as these scenes and sounds died gradually away, and twilight melted into moonlight, an unusual sultriness was perceptible in the air, and electric flashes were now and then observed, that became more terrific in the thick of night. Every possible precaution was now adopted against the threatening storm, which at length burst upon them with the utmost fury; whilst their miserable shelter consisted only of half-a-dozen thatch-sheaves and a broken umbrella! One little boy on getting off the bed, found himself up to the knees in water; and the old people fearing some fatal conclusion to the disaster, arose on their knees and devoutly prayed to God for aid.

However, on the abatement of the storm, no serious personal damage could be discovered; and as soon as day dawned over the woody hills, cheerful as larks the whole party were at work, and, before evening, succeeded in constructing a temporary residence of straw and rushes, somewhat resembling in its architecture an Indian wigwam, and in it they dwelt during the erection of a more substantial cottage.

This cottage might now be seen from several points of the surrounding country—no unpleasant object in the quiet green landscape. It was built of nicely dressed stone, and roofed with tiles. Its ground-floor comprised a "parlour," sitting-room, and kitchen—the upper story being divided into rooms to match—each tastefully supplied with furniture and ornaments. There was also a neat barn and other outhouses attached, and appropriately stocked; and, excepting the windows and part of the upholstery, ALL was the handiwork of that untutored family! Two pieces of land, formerly boggy waste, but now well drained and cultivated, stretched along the lane-side in opposite directions; immediately adjoining the house was a flourishing garden; and one or two of the neighbouring gentry, astonished and gratified by such enterprise and skill, let the old man a few additional acres of pasture; so that he at length attained what he said had ever been his highest—certainly an honourable—aim: the rank, though in its humblest degree, of a British farmer!

Such is one of the specimens of the cottage life of Nottinghamshire, which the poor would do well to imitate, and the wealthy to encourage.

Chapter Twelfth.

THE MUSIC OF NATURE.

LET us relieve our ramblings with a short discourse on music.

The universal hymn of praise ascending for ever to that Being who can hear and comprehend it all better than you or I can comprehend one of its notes—of what countless millions of voices is it composed, each voice ever keeping its own distinct and appropriate key, as regularly as any instrument in a well arranged orchestra! If it be not so, why do the linnet in Kelvin Grove, and the lark over Salisbury Plain, still sing precisely the same parts they sang in Paradise? Why pipes the wind in one key through the pine, in another through the willow, or poplar, and in another through the oak, in such beautiful swells and falls of Æolian melody? Depend upon it, there is perpetual harmony in the hymn of creation; and, that we cannot all clearly perceive it, is not so much an argument against the fact, as an evidence of our own limitedness of capacity and dulness of soul. How eloquently John Edwards

brings this home to us in one of the fine rhapsodies that characterise his poem, "The Tour of the Dove." The Dove is well known as the wildest of the wild streams of the Derbyshire mountains. Sometimes it goes leaping, and flashing, and shouting along, over a series of little falls, calling down the echoes from the cragged and wooded heights; and then quietly glides into some lone and shadowy recess, where, as you loiter about, it is lost to the eye, and its presence is only revealed to you by its dulcet warblings. There is one sublime fabric of caverned rocks, which, from the resemblance of its features to those of sacred architecture, has obtained the name of Dove Dale Church, standing in one of the portals of which the poet thus sings:—

"I glance along the dale from right to left:
It seems as Paradise were passing by,
And I beheld it from this secret cleft:
Flowers yield their fragrance; trees, luxuriant, high,
Climb the rude rocks; and in the orient sky,
O'er yonder peak, the sun reveals his fires:
The sparkling stream of Dove hath caught his eye!
His glory lightens all the cliffs and spires,
And at the sight my soul breaks forth in rapt desires.

"O! hither bring the harp from Judah's palms,
With psaltery, sackbut, dulcimer, and lute:
The music tuned of old to golden psalms,
This crag-built church—these rocky aisles will suit!
They come—the wilderness no more is mute:
The winds have brought the harpings of the sky;
Dove breathes its dulcet notes—the lark his flute;
The psaltery, trees—the sackbut, caves supply,
And one harmonious voice of praise ascends on high!"

The Æolian lyre itself was the discovery rather than the invention of one whose soul within him was strung

in accordance with the melodies without; and there can be no doubt, that as a prolonged contemplation of any class of phenomena quickens, refines, and exalts the faculty that perceives them, so the organ of melody may be imperceptibly cultivated in those whose ideas are associated with vocal nature, until they become extraordinarily gifted with musical power and taste, and are led to echo in the modulations of their own voices, or through the medium of ingeniously contrived instruments, those harmonies to which Nature herself may have awakened their minds. May not all our music, in short, have had its origin in some such principle?

Though not myself practically a musician, my love of melody—especially of natural melody—amounts to a passion; and when wandering in the solitudes of old Sherwood, there has often come upon me an irresistible impulse to compose poetry to the *airs* into which the many wild sounds there resolved themselves—just as Burns felt impelled to measure out and rhyme appropriate sentiments to the old national airs of Scotland whenever he heard them. With what enchanting effect have Wordsworth and Keats, and other great bards, obeyed the same impulse in their lonely musings! But nature is always making music to the souls of poets, and their songs are excellent just in proportion to the truthfulness with which they reiterate its tones.

In the soft and solemn hush of a moonlit summer night, how sweet it is to linger on the verge of an old wood, between, and equally distant from, two remote waterfalls. All the artificial sounds of day have sub-

sided with its labours and its light. There is just wind enough to stir, but not to rustle the leaves; yet anon it gently swells, and the voice of one of the cascades, so far off as to gleam minutely as a fallen star through the glades, swells with it on the ear, until it has attained its highest pitch; and then, as it slowly again dies away, the voice of the opposite one which had whiles being receding grows more loud; and thus, advancing and receding by turns, stream tells to stream the lulling tale of night, and the solemn woods breathe forth in long, deep under-tones, a strain of their own, that, combining with the other, melts the whole soul into musical ecstasy.

Yes; music is everywhere. Not only do we hear it in the winged voices of the sky, and the wild notes of the woodland: the sea is for ever sending up gratulations to the Eternal, and even fish make music. Do you doubt it? Then read the following, by a philosophic American writer:—"During several of my voyages on the Spanish main, in the neighbourhood of Paraguay and San Juan de Nicaragua, from the nature of the coast, we were compelled to anchor at a considerable distance from the shore; and every evening from dark till late night, our ears were delighted with Æolian music, that could be heard beneath the counter of our schooner. At first I thought it was the sea-breeze sweeping through the strings of my violin, (the bridge of which I had inadvertently left standing,) but after examination I found it was not so. I then placed my ear on the rail of the vessel, when I was continually charmed with the most heavenly strains that ever fell

upon my ear. They did not sound as though close to us, but were sweet, mellow, and aerial, like the soft breathings of a thousand lutes, touched by the fingers of the deep sea-nymphs, at an immense distance. Although I have considerable music in my soul, one night I became tired, and was determined to fish. My luck in half an hour was astonishing; I had half-filled my bucket with the finest white cat-fish; and being late, and the cook asleep, and the moon shining, I filled the bucket with water, and took fish and all into my cabin for the night. I had not fallen asleep, when the same sweet notes again fell upon my ear; and getting up, what was my surprise to find my 'cat-fish' discoursing sweet sounds to the sides of the bucket! I examined them closely, and discovered that there was attached to each lower lip an excrescence divided by soft wiry fibres. 'By the pressure of the upper lip thereon, and by the exhalation and discharge of breath, a vibration was created, similar to that produced by the breath on the tongue of a Jew's harp." Truly, then, music *is* everywhere!

Did you ever hear a history of the musician Guzikow? If not, I will tell it you. It ought to be known by all who would understand the resources of nature. "M. Guzikow was a Polish Jew; a shepherd in the service of a nobleman. From earliest childhood music seemed to pervade his whole being. As he tended his flocks in the loneliness of the fields, he was for ever fashioning flutes and reeds from the trees that grew around him. He soon found that the tone of the flute varied according to the wood he used; by degrees he came to

know every tree by its sound; and the forests stood around him a silent oratorio. The skill with which he played on his rustic flutes attracted attention. The nobility invited him to their houses, and he became a favourite of fortune. Men never grew weary of hearing him. But soon it was perceived that he was pouring forth the fountains of his life in song: physicians said he must abjure the flute or die. It was a dreadful sacrifice, for music to him was life. His old familiarity with the tones of the forest came to his aid. He took four round sticks of wood, and bound them close together with bands of straw: across these he arranged numerous pieces of round smooth wood of different kinds. They were arranged irregularly to the eye, although harmoniously to the ear; for some jutted beyond the straw-bound foundation at one end, and some at the other; in and out in apparent confusion. The whole was lashed together with twine, as men would fasten a raft. This was laid on a common table, and struck with two small ebony sticks. Rude as the instrument appeared, Guzikow brought from it such rich and liquid melody, that it seemed to take the heart of man on its wings, and bear it aloft to the throne of God. They who have heard it, describe it as even far exceeding the miraculous warblings of Paganini's violin. The Emperor of Austria heard it, and forthwith took the Polish peasant into his own especial service. In some of the large cities he now and then gave a concert by royal permission; and on such an occasion he was seen (says that delightful and amiable writer, Mrs. Child, whom I am copying) by a friend of

mine at Hamburg. The countenance of the musician was very pale and haggard, and his large dark eyes wildly expressive. He covered his head according to the custom of the Jews; but the small cap of black velvet was not to be distinguished in colour from the jet black hair, that fell from under it and flowed over his shoulders in glossy natural ringlets. He wore the costume of his people—an ample robe that fell about him in graceful folds. From head to foot all was black as his own hair and eyes, relieved only by the burning brilliancy of a diamond on his breast. The butterflies of fashion were, of course, attracted by the unusual and poetic beauty of his appearance; and ringlets *a la Guzikow* were the order of the day. Before this singularly gifted being stood a common wooden table, on which reposed his rude-looking invention. He touched it with the ebony sticks. At first you heard a sound as of wood only; the orchestra rose higher and higher, till it drowned its voice; then gradually subsiding, the wonderful instrument rose above other sounds, clear, warbling like a nightingale; the orchestra rose higher, like the coming of the breeze—but above them all swelled the sweet tones of the magic instrument, rich, liquid, and strong, like a skylark piercing the heavens! They who heard it listened in delighted wonder, that the trees could be made to speak thus under the touch of genius."

The foregoing sketch of Guzikow recalls to mind the shopkeeper's boy, in this country, whose passion for music was so annoying to his master, that he was deprived of all ostensible means of gratifying it. Still,

genius was not to be thwarted; and covering himself overhead at night with the bed-clothes, he played a variety of Jew's harps, in suppressed tones, when the family was asleep. The idea next occurred, that one harp might be constructed with a variety of tongues, and this he at length found means of accomplishing, when immense audiences became thrilled with ecstasy by his public concertos on so simple but ingenious an instrument, as wave after wave of delicious melody flowed from its vibrations.

It reminds one still more of the discovery of Richardson, the quarryman, among the Westmoreland or Cumberland hills, who, observing while at his work, that the stones he threw down, from being very metallic, often emitted a musical sound, made a large instrument somewhat in imitation of Guzikow's wooden one, and with his sons, who learnt to play upon it in concert, visited London as well as most of our large provincial towns, to the enjoyment of all who listened to his "rock band," the depth and richness of the lower notes of which, or the "brilliancy" of the higher, having seldom been equalled by any other instrument.

Yet, after all, to human ear, what sound can ever be more sweet than the human voice—especially when the undying soul of poetry is made to breathe in its passionate tones? Haunts of my youth! how doubly dear to me are ye in your association with the native lays, that even yet reverberate as sweetly as when first they rung in the halls of my spirit! Years have passed, and even when lingering where the wild surges of the ocean lashed the far Caledonian shore, and the hum and

stir of half the towns of two nations were rising between me and that dear spot; clear and distinct through all as "flute-notes in a storm," came from the forest to the ear of fancy, the wild shrill carols of my early companions, with which, on a "Christmas Eve," they were wont to pierce the star-lit welkin until it rang again as in glad responses to their strains. In some parts of the country, I am told, nothing of the kind is practised; but in my native district, on that occasion, all who can become minstrels join in bands—old men and boys and young maidens together—and passing away from village to hamlet, and from hamlet to lonely farm, their music, heard afar through the still, cold night, thrills the brain and heart with a sensation no pen can describe.

In our little town of Sutton-in-Ashfield, especially, the people excel in this spontaneous kind of minstrelsy so far as to render it famous through half the country; and the cause, I think, may be easily explained. A few generations back the forest around lay entirely open, and the population, then but small, was composed almost exclusively of woodmen and shepherds. Subsequently, however, as the approximate forest was enclosed, the stocking loom was introduced, and the population began rapidly to increase, without any facilities having being left for their old rural sports; and for these, of course, necessity would suggest as a substitute some new but cheap and easy recreation. This, for a reason readily assignable, was vocal music. Tailors and shoemakers can lighten their labours by conversation; but stockingers are debarred this privilege by

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the noise of their looms, which, however, is not so loud as to prevent their singing together, since their attitude is more erect, and their labour not at all distressing to the lungs. The result of this is that many of their workshops have become a species of musical colleges. If one of them perchance should get a higher reputation than another for having good and skilful voices in it, any young aspirant to vocal celebrity will endeavour to get employment at that shop in preference to another, for the pleasure of association and improvement; and therefore it is, that in some of these humble seminaries may often be heard the glees and hymns of our best composers, sung in a style that, in the concert-room of any large city, could not fail to attract admiring and delighted crowds.

Thus, long ere the names of Hullah and Mainzer were known, the popular system of singing with which they are now identified was introduced by Nature herself among the artizans and peasantry of Sherwood Forest. In an evening when their labours are ended, large groups of them gather at the ends of the village streets, or around the trunk of some old wayside tree, making all the echoes joyful by the systematic union of their loud and tuneful voices: and no one can compare this delightful practice with the brutal sports of other times in that district, and of present times in some other districts, without feeling exceedingly thankful for the charms of music, and wishing to "soothe the savage breast" with them wherever savagery lingers.

Chapter Thirteenth.

BIRKLAND AND BILHAGH.

THERE are times when I almost wish that I had been a painter instead of a writer. Better still, perhaps, had Providence made me both;—though, no doubt, when one thinks of it, Providence must have known its own business best. Yet why, since veriest childhood, this passion of enjoyment, with such inadequate power for its reflection or expression, when gazing on rural scenes? Ah! I begin to know the reason, now! It is because God is his own interpreter, and needs no such puny help to make the beauty of his creation felt, but wills that we should *all* open our eyes and souls, and read and understand his works in the original. Art, therefore—whether its instrument be the pen or pencil—can have no higher mission than this, to win us to nature and nature's Founder; and if we could but properly approach and appreciate these, little need should we have for art at all. Never occurred to me more livingly a thought of this kind, than on my first visit to the Great Exhibition in London. With

eager curiosity and amazement I had wandered about from scene to scene; and the poetry of form and colour in ten thousand vivid characters, as well as that of motion and use in the department of machinery, had done for me all they could in such a "world of industry at one view." But—be I called Goth or Vandal, no matter, I must confess it—there was nothing in the whole of that "third heaven of art," as some have named it, which gave me a tithe of the delight occasioned by my suddenly coming back upon a sight of the grand old TREE, which no man had made, near the crystal fountain. Beautiful, wonderful, and worthy of high admiration as was all the rest, I felt, and felt deeply, how inadequate would have been the combined ingenuity of the whole exhibition to the production of that single and simple specimen of the works of the Almighty. And then, as my thoughts stretched away to the woods, and hills, and seas, and skies—to the myriads of flowers that bloom by day, and the stars that shine by night—the matchless forms and colours throughout creation—the varieties of animated nature—the mechanism and motion of the universe, and "the music of the spheres"—I could not help bending under a sad consciousness of the thousands among those who had crowded up to this exhibition, and of the millions everywhere, seldom grateful for, or thoughtful of, such blessings at all,—though something of them could be enjoyed in every locality without money and without price.

I wonder of how many trees it is true, that their branches expand precisely as far as their roots: so

that the leaves, acting as conductors one to another, at last shed the rain, that comes down to them from the heavens, precisely where the outermost fibres of the roots are using their tiny lips in the earth, to suck it in! There are some naturalists who contend for this economy—reciprocity—harmony—whatever we call it—throughout the forest; and who say that, when there is any disturbance of it, the cause will generally be found in the trees not having on every side free space for their expansion, in which case their forms are irregular; whilst without such interruption their branches would be equal all around. For myself, however, I cannot but believe in a sort of vegetable magnetism, and that various attractions as well as obstructions are involved in these effects;—in other words, that certain trees sympathise with and seek each other; whilst some, again, are mutually repellant. As to some kinds of willows, poplars, &c., that shoot almost straight up into the sky, it is said that they have no need of such a system of external intercourse, branch with root, since they are indigenous only to brooksides and other places naturally moist. But whether all this be fact or fancy, there can be no doubt that the whole creation is subject to laws as beautiful and orderly as these—could we only *see* or *hear* their magical operation!

Nor is the diversity of nature in this respect, less wonderful than its harmony. By what law is it that the concretions of vapour on our window-pane, upon a frosty morning, should all be perfectly assimilated to the type of some tendril, leaf, or flower—and yet those tendrils, leaves, and flowers so various—but that, truly

with more evanescent materials,) the same cause is at work which fashioned the solid globe, with its gigantic children, the rocks and mountains,—descending gradually thence to the very minutest forms, and making the violet and the primrose, though growing in the same soil, warmed by the same sun, wet by the same dew, and fanned by the same breeze, not only so widely different in shape, but in colour?

The principles of correspondence and contrast are still more curiously displayed, perhaps, in this—that, in every grade of nature may be found some object, the type of another object in a grade or sphere still higher. Thus, in the vegetable world, there is a regular gradation of forms, qualities, and functions, from those of the lowly staghorn-moss, up to the oak that bays the storm with its outflung antlers. And in animated nature we find the stag-beetle, possibly haunting that very moss; the stag-moth, finding some higher haunt still, among equally kindred herbs and shrubs; and the stag itself, loving best the forest, where, as it couches in the distance, its antlers can scarcely be distinguished from the fallen branches of the old oaks! Yet, see the harmony of contrast, as well as of similitude in the same wild realm: the spiral foxglove shooting up from among the palmy ferns; the golden furze against the purple heather; the lissome, tressy birches between the massive unyielding oaks; the half torpid hedgehog and the bounding squirrel; with the owl and the dove, as close, yet opposite in their natures, as night and day, or superstition and religion. While, what is more wonderful than all, these objects have each a type

and counter-type in human society,—men whose minds, physiognomies, manner, character, sympathies, and mental and moral effluences, are all analogous. In short, the rule appears to hold with regard to every form of being,—as though Nature made all her works according to some grand pattern, first sketched by the hand of the Supreme; of which her heat, corresponding to His love; her light, to His wisdom; her actinism, magnetism, &c., all having their spiritual originals in Him; are the subtle, potent, and cunning fingers with which she operates!

That we may enjoy at once the very alpha and omega—the genesis and apocalypse—of all sylvan life, let us carry these ideas with us into BIRKLAND and BILHAGH. And, first, be it supposed that we have started from the Worksop station of the Manchester, Sheffield, and Lincolnshire Railway; that we have glanced at the towers of the old abbey-church, rising over the town-roofs, on our left; and had some glimpses, too, of the fine old manorial domain on our right;—that, a few miles further on, we have gazed upon the ducal mansion, the far-winding lakes with their white flocks of swans, the thriving woods of all hues, the elegant terraces and bridges, and the many lawn-like openings of sunny Clumber;—that Thoresby House, in turn, and the vistas of Thoresby Park, terminating only upon the horizon, and over-scattered by the noblest herds of deer; intersected by the brightest waters, and guarded by majestic woods; with the model hamlet of Budby, and its plains of heather and gorze and broom, interspersed with thousands of white-blossomed hawthorns,

have all been passed,—and that we have at length reached that king of all the forest, "the Major Oak," near one of the paths from Budby to Edwinstowe.

Or, if it better suit your convenience, we will reach the same point by another route. We will leave Nottingham by a morning train for Mansfield; and, if you be a good walker, we will go forward on foot; if not, we can take horses or a gig and go by Mansfield Woodhouse and Parliament Oak, to the village of Edwinstowe, making a slight detour, if you like, to see the Duke of Portland's new lodge, and the field of some of his marvellous agricultural experiments—in contrast with the last mouldering wreck of the old royal palace—at Clipston. We will suppose that our horses are safely stabled at Edwinstowe, and that my friend, John Trueman, the naturalist, or some other intelligent villager, has undertaken to accompany us. And here we are, in whatever season you choose—say, to commence with, in late May, or early June.

But now, for comparison or contrast, as the case may be, I must, with other writers on these remarkable scenes, ask you a few questions relative to your past experiences. Have you, from childhood, loved to haunt the ruins of old castle-keeps and cathedral aisles? Or have you gone still further back into the works of time, and mused for days together among the mountains, or on the wild sea-shore, where rocks are piled on rocks, sometimes in the most majestic, and at others in the most fantastic forms,—at once inviting and defying the elemental influences of ages, and still standing unconquered though not unscathed by the

warfare? Or have you sought the romance of geology, in those deep caverns of the hills, where stalactite and stalagmite display their grotesque and wondrous mimicry of the world outside, and where the blendings of incongruous shapes provoke description only that they may laugh at its baffled efforts? Because, if you have, there was not enough in all these to produce an impression equal to that made upon the soul by the scenes to which we are here introduced; and I will tell you why. The castles and cathedrals, though grand and venerable enough as works of art, had ceased to be much more than monuments of the past. The rocks, though natural and sublime as when they were first broken or reared, had themselves remained through all changes motionless and unimpressible as death. The curiosities of the caverns were as things of a world not yet come to life. But here, in Bilhagh and Birkland, are thousands of oaks, most of which were growing in the days of our Saxon ancestors, and many of them are *living and putting out their fresh leaves still!*

If it be true that an oak is three hundred years in its growth,—that it enjoys the same length of time in undecaying maturity, and again as long a period in its venerable decline; while the hollow trunk, with a few scanty branches, will often stand at least another century, and occasionally two or three, or even more; we need not wonder at finding the cypher of king John, surmounted by the figure of a crown,* (an instance of which I have seen myself,) beneath the

* Mr. Burt, a member of the Society of Friends, lately residing in London, had a slab, cut from a Sherwood oak, and bearing these characters.

bark of some of these trees. Yon very "Parliament Oak" we passed on the road was a full grown tree in the reign of Edward the First, since its name is derived from his holding a great council under its shade, on hearing the news of a revolt of the Welsh, whilst he was hunting. To-day I was reading that, a short time since, "the old oak of Ross, supposed to have stood 1500 years, was totally destroyed, by some boys lighting a fire in its trunk." Judging by present appearances, and taking its history into account, one would think that Parliament Oak might possibly be almost as old. And yet there are hundreds here, in Birkland and Bilhagh, which seem but a very few centuries its juniors—still girt round the middle, it is true, with some foliage, but throwing out their gaunt arms far above, and clutching the ground below with their tendonous roots, as vigorously as if ready for a contest with all the storms of centuries to come!

The dimensions of the Major Oak have already been published. A considerable portion of its *tendons* are seen above ground; and, measuring these about half way between their junction with the trunk and their insertion in the earth, they give a circumference of nearly thirty yards. The circumference of the trunk at nearly six feet from the ground—the height at which begin the branches—is thirty feet. The circumference of one of the arms, at a distance of four feet from the trunk, is twelve feet. The circumference of the outspread tree, at the utmost extent of its branches, as measured by Christopher Thomson in 1840, was two hundred and forty feet. The recess in its trunk—for

with all its superincumbent mass of branch and leaf, it is quite hollow—affords a diameter of nearly seven feet, and a height of fifteen feet;—is, in short, not unlike the interior of one of those dark circular towers we sometimes find in ruined castles;—and seven persons at once have been known to partake a meal in it; while, no doubt, with a little contrivance, it might have held several more.* This cavity has a narrow but convenient opening to the south, and commands a pleasant look-out into the forest, whilst affording excellent shelter. Many a poor wanderer has passed a winter's night in a worse place; and yet, notwithstanding this internal decay, it is externally one of the most noble and perfect trees in the kingdom. Some oaks which Mr. Noel Hoare took me to see, on Moorhay Lawn, in Rockingham Forest, are very wonderful in their way—almost, by their venerable aspect, taking one back to the days of the Druids; and, by their remaining dimensions, giving a remarkable sense of the greatness and glory of their prime. But in the age of its capacious trunk,—the power of its yet solid limbs, and the freshness of its foliage,—we have, in the Major Oak, antiquity, majesty, and beauty at once, and apparently not likely to be much diminished for centuries to come!

Spreading away from this point, for a mile or two eastward, in the direction of Ollerton, and partly imparked in the precincts of Thoresby, are other trees of the most patriarchal, weather-warped, and picturesque

* It was at one time called the Cockpen Tree, from its interior being occupied as a henroost.

character. Sometimes they stand, two or three together, without foliage at all, on a space otherwise comparatively cleared; and, in the distance, are not unlike the shattered columns, arches, and pinnacles of ruined temples. Sometimes they look more like the bastions of old citadels from which all the intervening walls had crumbled away. Anon, they become more densely congregated, and through them are seen far-stretching glades—"long-drawn aisles and fretted vaults"—not very dissimilar from the decayed and desolated streets of an ancient oriental city; beautifully justifying C. R. Pemberton's idea of "a ruined Palmyra of the forest"—where, little of animated life can be discerned, save now and then, flapping through the still gloom, one of those lonely birds that love to haunt the ruin and the wilderness: unless—as if just to dissolve the dream and remind us of our real when and whereabouts—some stray or startled deer should bound swiftly by, and make us almost expect to see a wild outlaw leap forth from his lair to give it chase!

Many very interesting sketches of these scenes have been written—some of which may be found collected in a little book, "Leaves from Sherwood Forest," by my friend, January Searle. Pemberton's was the first of any consequence, after Major Rooke's, and still lives unmatched in the aptness of its analogues and the beauty of its fancies. But William Howitt's, in his "Rural Life of England," is perhaps the most graphic and faithful of them all. He says—"A thousand years, ten thousand tempests, lightnings, winds, and wintry violence, have all flung their utmost force on

these trees, and there they stand, trunk after trunk, scathed, hollow, grey, gnarled; stretching out their bare, sturdy arms, or their mingled foliage and ruin—a life in death. All is grey and old. The ground is grey beneath, the trees are grey with clinging lichens, the very heather and fern that spring beneath them have a character of the past. If you turn aside and step amongst them, your feet sink in a depth of moss and dry vegetation that is the growth of ages, or rather that ages have not been able to destroy. You stand and look around, and in the height of summer all is silent; it is like the fragment of a world forsaken."

He then describes many of the wonderful changes through which Europe—the world—has gone, since under these oaks King John pursued the red deer six hundred years ago, and continues—"Through all this these trees have here stood silently—and here they are! Monuments of ages that cannot be seen without raising in our souls remembrance of all these mighty things. To the contemplative mind they are inscribed all over with characters of strange power. They show us at a glance, and with a palpableness which few things besides possess, how far the day of their first growth is past by—how far the ages of feudalism and civilisation lie asunder." Nay, more. It might be added: they were seen springing up by the generation that first heard the glorious institutes of Alfred; and linger still, to touch with veneration the men who have married shore to shore by the electric telegraph, and who hope to see the just and liberal principle on which our nationality took root under that monarch, expand-

ing its influence until all the kingdoms of the earth are united in peace and amity,—as he united the warring elements of his own!

And now let us turn our faces westward towards Birkland—the land of birches—so named from every space between the oaks, (excepting a few drives, glades, and wood-walks designedly left open,) being filled up with delicate birch trees, in indescribable luxuriance and beauty.

Did you ever study the birch, as it stood alone on the lawn, or hung its tresses from the side of some wild dell, seeming to lend more grace to every object near it? On a rural sabbath morning, in winter,—after the mists of the night had fallen upon creation in one bright unsullied mantle of hoar-frost, so purely white as to make you weep that you had ever sinned in a world that could put on a look so calm and lovely,—did you ever notice how the slender birch seemed more modestly and yet more gracefully veiled, more white, more bright, more pure, and more suggestive of sweet and tender thoughts, than all? Did you mark how, more gladly yet more coyly than the other trees, she waved her lissome locks in spring, and was sought, as from sympathy, by the more gentle and innocent birds? And how, in summer and autumn, when her stem became so silvery and her leaves so golden, her loveliness, instead of waning, had only mellowed, whereby she still pre-eminently sustained her poetical character of "the lady of the woods?" If so, then tell me what you think of the thousands, and tens of thousands of such, here intermingling with these gigantic, ancient,

hoary oaks, extending for more than a mile around us, in Birkland!

Hearken again to what William Howitt says of *them*. "Birkland! it is a region of grace and poetry! I have seen many a wood of birches, and some of them amazingly beautiful too, in one quarter or other of this fair island; but in England nothing can compare with this. It must be confessed that the birch woods which clothe the mountain sides, beautify the glens, and stud the romantic lochs of Scotland, derive a charm from the lovely and sublime forms of those mountains, glens, and waters that is not to be expected in this lowland country. * * * But Birkland has some advantages which they have not. Its trees have reached a size which the northern ones have not; and the peculiar mixture of their lady-like grace with the stern and ample forms of these feudal oaks, produces an effect most fairylandish and unrivalled."

And there is not a season of the year—hardly an hour of the day or night—in which I have not had some acquaintance with these strange, wild haunts. Sometimes with warm, imaginative, poetical friends; but more often alone—if a man ever does feel alone with Nature—in summer, in winter—by sunlight and moonlight and starlight, and when there was no light at all—have I sought them, to *feel* as well as to *see* what they were; but it is not in the power of tongue or pen to describe some of the impressions thus made,—unless with the gift of a Shakspere or a Festus. In younger days, by the same rule that the humblest bird chants its own lay as well as it can, nor stops to ask permis-

sion of any one, I attempted to express what came uppermost in my thoughts, with little learning and no license but my own inclination, and once or twice essayed to give to sundry musings in Birkland a literary being. But the result showed rather what I *wanted* to do than what I should have done. And yet, those efforts had somewhat the effect, it was said, of suggesting much that they failed in describing. As "The Forester's Offering," in which they appeared, has long been out of print, and is not likely, in its old form, to be re-published, it may therefore be not out of propriety or taste to give a few of those fugitive passages, with some fresh ones, now: since they had at least the advantage of being indigenous to the locality. The chapter from which they are taken was headed

Woodland Wanderings.

Once more let us go where Nature loves to retire, and listen to the beat of her heart in the depths of the forest! It is a sunny Sunday evening, in August, and we are commencing our walk from Edwinstowe. We saw the inhabitants leaving their elegant old church two hours ago, and "taking off their several ways," some to village homes at hand, and others to where their lonely cottages smile or repose afar, in the grateful hush of sabbath fields and woodlands. And now we see many of the same people again turning out, as the day grows cool, to sit at their doors and watch its last foot-prints

in the sky; or rambling away, to impress their own, on this sweet strip of turf and heather that hems old Bilhagh—the uplifted arms of whose giant trees are already in sight. And here, having arrived mid-way between the village and the wood, let us linger a moment, to glance back on yon spire, now rising so finely above the trees which embower the rectory and that other adjacent mansion. How beautifully the slow-sinking sun has rosed it over with crimson light, until it actually appears to *bloom* above the mass of foliage from which it rises!

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Again we move westward. Twenty minutes have passed since we saw the sun shining *over* the far-receding forest, and now he has sunk *beyond*, and is turning the tresses of the birches into flowing gold; while the moon glides slowly—diffidently—palely—up the opposite sky, to contemplate the wondrous spectacle.

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A few seconds more; and mark through the gloom of the old groves yon lurid glare. It is only the last concentred glow of the departing sun, deepened by the medium through which we behold it, yet awful to the gaze as Nature's funeral pyre. But, anon, the only sign of what it has been, is a faint and still fading tinge, lingering "where the day joins the past eternity;" and soon even that, too, is gone, and a sense of the soft and solemn hush of night is over all things. And now the moon has strengthened her lamp, which, seemingly poised for a moment on yon tapering spire, throws its calm radiance hitherwards, across this strip of heather,

and beyond us, into those deepening glades, upon the sylphy birches—touching them, one could almost fancy, with life and love and joy. And are they not, at such a time, the representatives of most tender, delicate, and affectionate natures? * * * * Whence comes this overpowering veneration for the patriarchal oaks, and this love for the youthful birches of the forest? Teach us, Great Spirit, how it is, that as our familiarity with these natural objects becomes closer, our sympathies with the great human crowd are softened, refined, and expanded, and our sense of Thy goodness and power strengthened and elevated? Is it because there is, even now, an Eden on earth for those who will seek it; and dost Thou still walk with man in thy garden, in the cool and calm of the day, and commune with him, whilst the angels of truth and charity minister to his happiness?

> "O! why hath heaven for man so much regard,
> And all for love, and nothing for reward!"

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But listen! How soul-touching are the sounds of early night! A freshness arises in the air; and while it brings in sweet cadences the voices of far-off streams, it wakes, too, from the woods around us, a whisper so light—so soft—that at first we rather feel than hear it. And next is heard the waving of wings. A white bird passes through the calm gloom, like a sudden thought through the silent mind—and leaves it for a moment calmer than before. Yet, as the passing of a single thought will sometimes awaken the mind to eventual activity; so, after a brief lapse, seems the flight of that

bird to have quickened the scene around us. For the fern-owl has commenced its continuous *whir-r-r*, and is answered by loud and mysterious woodland cries. There is a general rustling among the bracken and brushwood, of those small animals that wander out under the shelter of night. The wind, which at first crept so softly, now comes with a rush, bringing with it the plaintive bleat of a single—perhaps a lost sheep, from the distant heath. Higher still it rises; till at last the roaring, rattling, and crashing of the branches, as it careers through the forest, make us glad to turn and see the village lights welcoming us back with their cheerful gleams. Let us come again to-morrow.

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Second Day.—It is a calm, grey forenoon; scarcely a breath is stirring; and we are again loitering quietly in Pemberton's "ruined Palmyra of the forest," near Cockglade. The first time I came to this part of the wood, it was with a neighbour, Samuel Briggs, from Sutton-in-Ashfield. It was in the month of March, when all weathers in one day gave to the scene a wildness and strangeness that struck us mute with wonder. But even this was surpassed on my next visit, which was with Robert Millhouse, the poet. We had come from Thompson's Grave, over the heather of Mansfield-forest, by Sherwood Hall, and along the side of a brook called the Vicker, to Clipston hamlet,—observing by the way many unmistakeable signs of a gathering storm. As we left the ruins of King John's palace, all the white objects in the landscape flashed whiter for the blackness of the sky,—that spurious sort of gleam

from the electric state of the atmosphere, which for a moment makes us look about to see where the sun is, and gives us the feeling of being half cheated when he is nowhere to be found. But this did not deter us from walking on till we had reached the verge of the wood—nor, indeed, until we had got a few hundreds of yards into one of its glades. And now came the crisis. It seemed as if Nature had determined on one of her grandest pyrotechnic displays. First, at some distance from us, came down a long shaft of lightning, like an inverted rocket; and a roar of thunder, like a volley from a thousand cannon followed. Quick, and quicker, after this, in every direction, and in every imaginable shape, the flashes succeeded one another; and still louder and more terrible grew the thunder with each. Sometimes they shot into the wood in white-hot balls. Anon they zig-zagged, and assimilated to the fantastic forms of the naked oak branches among which they fell. Now would descend a screw-like shaft, twirling in its course, yet apparently definite in its aim at some object below. Next might be seen others more like flying serpents, darting and taking their sinuous way from fold to fold of the louring mass of clouds; whilst the notched, scarred, gnarled, crinkled, and gaunt old trees wildly flung out their arms as if to snatch and bring them down. Altogether it seemed as though we had got into a strange but antiquated realm of powerful and mysterious beings, whose delight was in "the war of elements, the wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds." The knees of Millhouse smote together. The sentiment of veneration, in him at all times an

active principle, now almost overpowered him; and he stood for a time transfixed with wonder and awe.

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How different the scene when I went the next time! This was on one of those pleasant September days, "so pure, so calm so bright," which old George Herbert calls "the bridal of the earth and sky." The evening before I had been at Worksop, to meet Thomas Lister and a party of intelligent friends from Sheffield, and to spend an hour with poor C. R. Pemberton, who was then fast passing to "the land o' the leal." Leaving him behind, but bringing his blessing with us, in the morning, away the rest of us came, through Worksop Manor Park to Welbeck, and by the Greendale Oak—through an arch in the trunk of which formerly ran a coach-road—to Norton-Cuckney; thence through Carburton, Clumber, and Thoresby, to the Buck-gates, that open from that side into Bilhagh. It was the first time that any of the party, save myself, had been among these scenes; and had it not been for the thought of some—and especially one—not there, little could have been wanting to make us perfectly happy in such a heaven on earth of beautiful scenery and intellectual communion as the occasion afforded.

The aspects of the wood were much as we behold them now. For see, as we saunter along, the haze which for an hour past has been growing lighter, has cleared off altogether; and, as we cross Gleadthorpe Open, every glade is filled with a flood of soft, warm sunshine, that turns the stems of the birches on each side into gleaming colonnades; beyond which ferns, in

endless profusion, form a ground-work, far as eye can pierce the light openings, where huge oaks rise up here and there, and complete with their sublimity what has been by the smaller verdure with so much beauty begun.

Sometimes we come to what might not inaptly be called one of Nature's cathedral aisles. Two oaks, bending and embracing each other across the entrance to a glade, form a sort of portal arch. The white stems of the birches, extending here in such regular and graceful order, are its pillars. The dark trunk of a decayed tree, projecting at some distance, gives an antique pulpit; and a rude substitute for an organ is easily imagined, in the pendulous branches of some other trees beyond, through which, were the winds piping, they would make a not unfitting anthem.

Next we find ourselves in a half-cleared space, where oaks alone—solemn oaks—towering high into the heavens—completely encircle us. I have read that whenever Burns entered a druidical circle, he knelt and prayed. This was a place in which he would by impulse have done the same. It is one in which Millhouse was very near doing so.

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But see! we have started a stag, that has strayed from one of the neighbouring parks, on a pilgrimage to this primal haunt of his race. How beautifully he bounds away—now bowing his antlers, to miss the impending branches—now tossing them back, proudly conscious of his freedom and his fleetness! Hey! but he is joined by another at the junction of yon glades! Is it not a magnificent scene, as they scamper

away together, till entirely lost in the dim perspective? Does not the sight prepare you for meeting Robin Hood and Little John themselves in these solitudes?

And what a sylvan profusion we come to now, for which fancy itself is at a loss for similitudes! Ferns, nearly breast high, spread far away, amongst which an occasional scarlet foxglove rears its spiral column, or a lofty flowering thistle waves its radiant head in the sunshine, which penetrates between the commingling boughs of the oaks and birches of all sizes, hues, and shades, until our wonder is excited that a wood having only two kinds of trees should present such a variety of aspects that, though we might wander its mazes for years, a fresh scene would develop itself at every step, marked by some feature peculiarly its own!

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But again 'tis evening; and as we emerge from the thicket into this broad green "drive," the sky is rippled over with beauteous clouds—silvery in the zenith, yet deepening, in their descent westward, from golden to vermilion; and sweetly in the calm sounds the song of "The Brave Old Oak" yon young naturalist has left off his moth-catching to sing, as he leans over a gate, and gazes at the subject of the song itself, by the darkening wood-side. And what a delicious treat we have, while threading the moonlight glades back to the village, as the wild cry of the kestrel or the owl breaks the low whisper of the trees, and carries its romantic melancholy "far into the heart!" How much the witchery of the time enhances that of the scene! What a serene and pensive loveliness it adds to these

vestal birches, and what a dignity to those "hoary senators of the woods," that linger, like the sages of a world departed, with solemn admonitions from the past to the future!

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Birkland and Bilhagh! what grand old mementos of our country's prime! Only think of the time when a lonely traveller had to amble along, with but slight occasional exceptions, for days and days, through scenery like this! How different the experiences daguerreotyped upon or interpenetrating *his* consciousness—transmuted into *his* mental and moral being—from that which composes *ours!* Yet here is our advantage over him:—we can, as it were, *turn back* for so many ages into these scenes of his; whilst those to which we are more generally accustomed, must lie as far on this side the bounds of his anticipations as though they belonged to a separate world and a different race!

What lingers of open forest in the parish of Mansfield and some other parts of Sherwood is now vanishing, more rapidly than ever, before the hand of improvement. And I love improvement. I love to see the land change with the mind of the people, the more rapidly the better, from a wilderness to a garden. And yet I trust, both in the land and in the mind, a few such memorials of the old time as Birkland and Bilhagh may long remain,—that the beginning and the end of our rural and social history may be the better understood by our progeny, as the world rolls on towards a fulfilment of its wondrous destiny. Birkland and Bilhagh, farewell!

Chapter Fourteenth.

PEMBERTON, THE WANDERER.

IT has of late become the fashion, in certain circles, to speak with great contempt of all itinerants. Yet there need be comets in the social system, as well as planets; and the world is greatly indebted to many whose vocation was in their movement from place to place. I speak not of the great forefathers of mankind, nor of the very obvious instances of our Saviour, and of his Apostles of every age; but will take a few examples from secular life in recent times,—such as those of Oliver Goldsmith, who sold his coat for a flute, and, in pursuit of knowledge which he afterwards made our own, travelled over the continent, buying his daily bread with music. John Howard, who wandered from prison to prison, in almost every country of Europe, lightening somewhat by his efforts the great amount of human woe. Isaac Walton, strolling from scene to scene ostensibly as an angler, but really as a meditator on whatever was good and fair in the works of God which he beheld, and which inspired his beautiful disquisition

on the worth of a thankful spirit,—a passage of his writings which ought to be framed and hung up in every home. William Hutton, who, at the age of more than three score and ten, strapped his knapsack on his shoulders at Birmingham, and walked into Northumberland and Cumberland, to explore the remains of the great Roman Wall. Ledyard and Stewart, who essayed and nearly accomplished a pedestrian passage round the globe. Mungo Park, and our other great African travellers. Humboldt, in his "Cosmos"—Waterton, in his "Wanderings"—Derwent Conway, in his "Solitary Walks through many Lands"—William Howitt, in his "Visits to Remarkable Places"—Father Mathew, in his Temperance Missions, and Elihu Burritt, in those of Peace;—if these were, or are not itinerants, who have been? And who, by basking in what is called respectable ease at home, have done more good in their way than some of these?

Just as rational were it to find fault with the swallow, and other cheerful birds, for not staying in one clime of perpetual summer, instead of coming to gladden with their visits the summer of our own, as to speak with disrespect of the men whose calling is from place to place, to relieve and redeem the monotony of more fixed inhabitiveness from absolute stagnation. Philosophers say that the use of comets is to purify, revivify, or regulate the solar system; and such is the office of many of the itinerants in the social system. They wander from sphere to sphere that they may realise to themselves whatever is good in each, and imbue with it, in turn, whomsoever they may elsewhere meet.

And some such man was CHARLES REECE PEMBERTON, one of our most noted pilgrims to Sherwood Forest, and to whom reference has been occasionally made in the previous chapter.

My intention here is not to give you more than a mere glimpse of this remarkable phenomenon of humanity. For anything more ample you will do well to read the memoir and collection of his literary remains, by John Fowler, of Sheffield: though, after all, there is hardly a possibility of any writer giving a full estimate of such a man. Speaking of him as I remember him, he had a forehead almost like that given us in the portrait of Jean Paul Richter, but with infinitely more flexibility of face; to which may be added a light, elastic, but not diminutive frame, a wrinkle of care, an eye of love, a quiver of restrained satire, and a temperament of lightning. Such, in his person, was

> ——— the wayless wanderer,
> Who might be welcomed to a thousand homes
> By sympathetic hearts his heart had warm'd,
> By spirits quicken'd with his own quick thought:
> Yet making but one home unto himself—
> And it the boundless universe—he roamed,
> As 'twere beyond the ills of mortal nature,
> And seemed to revel in angelic joys,
> Attaining heaven before of earth acquit!

Sent early forth from his native scenes, in Wales, and, —as is too often the lot of men so constituted,—destined to be loved by almost all but those who should have loved him most, he fulfilled his mission as a wanderer, not so much by choice as of necessity, seeking

those sympathies in the Great Heart of the Universe, which from that of the individual are often corrupted, perverted, or denied; and thus at the hidden source of half his life lay a burning secret.

> How little know they who suppose
> That fervid spirits seek to roam,
> Careless of others' joys or woes,
> Merely from lacking love of home!
> Each heart its own emotion knoweth,
> And that which deepest is least showeth;

And Pemberton, with all his genius and his goodness, had reason to be one of the deepest mourners over that Humanity he was destined to go about the world to serve,—which probably made him love it only the more.

Stung, on one occasion, by an expression of mistrust, which he did not deserve but was unable in the emergencies of the moment to disqualify, he ran away, while yet a youth, from some mercantile situation, at Birmingham, and went on board a ship of war, where he was still less at home, and from which he again, as early as possible, made his escape in disgust. In the meantime his genius was rapidly developing, and his taste maturing. He had realised the greatest thoughts of the greatest dramatists and poets. He had found their analogues in the drama of common life. There were few types of character, whether tragic or comic, that he could not comprehend and impersonate with consummate effect. He had discovered in himself, also, the faculty of ventriloquism; and, thus endowed, he sought employment on the stage, and found it. But even this did not satisfy the longings of his nature.

He was restless; but it was not with the restlessness of the wilful vagabond: it was that of *the heart that had not found its place*,—the soul which longs to be *known* and *trusted* by another beyond itself, that they may become *one*, yet finds not its counterpart.

Some being, however, he appeared to have met, and to have invested with all the attributes of the one he wanted. He married; but his marriage was like eating of the fabled apple by the Dead Sea, which is loveliness to the eye, but ashes to the taste. I never knew, nor would it boot much to inquire into, all the particulars of Pemberton's marriage, and of its ultimate disruption. There is a class of people in the world, who, with a subtle and malignant curiosity that apes the form of sympathy, love to pry into the domestic concerns of others, often to their sad marring. If vulgar and uneducated, such meddlers look upon a matrimonial quarrel with much the same *gusto* as that indulged in by the mob at a prize fight, who take a delight in hounding on the combatants, and in contemplating their mutual torture. If more educated and artistic, they take the same interest in it that they would in a dramatic performance, and patronize it with their scrutiny, that they may at length show their own penetration and analytical skill to the world in a criticism of the consequences. To such sympathisers, the sufferings of the mutual victims may furnish fine sport; though life-long sorrow, or death, to at least one of them, is sure to be the result. But as I am sure, from long observation, that if a man and his wife cannot understand each other, the world will be still less likely

to understand them, it would be useless here to enter into any inquiry as to the first causes of difference between Pemberton and his wife. Suffice it that just when his mind was reaching its meridian, she transferred whatever affection she might ever have felt for him to some military officer—I don't know the scoundrel's name—and left the man of genius, and of an overflowing heart, a *widowed husband*, to all the burning griefs of personal solitude, though not without the consciousness of public curiosity and misdeeming.

The natural effect of this upon some men would have been to vitrify the very fountains of feeling, and freeze them up in hopeless misanthropy. But with Pemberton it was just the contrary. These new wounds in *his* spirit seemed only so many additional well-springs of gushing love for all who sorrow: and how many are they! Joy unshared is misery; and as he still felt, notwithstanding his privations, how vast, how beautiful, and how full of good things is the universe of God, and what an intense experience of this may thrill even the most downcast of mankind, when once enkindled, he resolved that to supply the humane spark, wherever he could, should henceforth be his more especial vocation —that he would woo Suffering as a bride the wide world over, that he might stanch her wounds and cool her fevered lips, and touch her sobbing heart with a sense of the great sources of consolation beyond herself.

In this character, Pemberton visited almost every part of the world, his powers as an elocutionary lecturer and ventriloquist earning him the means of travel. In our own country there was scarcely a town in which

he was not a favourite with "the best of the best." Did you ever know Charles Reece Pemberton?' said I one day to Bernard Barton and Anne Knight (the "A. K." of Charles Lamb's correspondence.) at Woodbridge, in Suffolk. "Yes," was the startled and joyous reply, "didst *thou* know him *too?* He once came hither, a perfect stranger; and with no other passport but the names of William and Mary Howitt: he gave us some private lectures; and we loved him so that we did not let him leave us for more than a fortnight!"

"Did you ever meet with Charles Pemberton?" said a friend to me, down in a remote part of the county of Durham. And on being answered in the affirmative, he rejoined, "then you have seen one of the most interesting men the world ever had in it!"

Once, while on an afternoon's ramble with that noble impersonation of an elderly woman with a young heart, Mary Russell Mitford, among the scenes of "Our Village," in Berkshire or Wiltshire, I happened to say that I wondered if, of all the people who had been to see her, one was Charles Reece Pemberton. "Yes," said she, quite startled and interested, "did *you* also know Pemberton?"

To know the name of Pemberton was at any time a sufficient introduction to Ebenezer Elliott, and many of his most intelligent cotemporaries in Sheffield. And though he first dropped into that town as a stranger, his memory is still held in reverence, and his portrait treasured in many a house and heart.

On taking breakfast once with a gentleman, Mr. Flower, at Stratford-on-Avon, I happened to put the

same question, (never answered in the negative,) had he ever known Pemberton? "Pemberton!" said he, starting,—"Yes, *when we lived in the back woods of America*, and had just got our log-house built, he came in one day, quite a stranger to us; and we were so much interested in his company, that we made him stay with us a full month; and a most instructive and delightful god-send was his visit to our whole family, in such a wilderness. But I have since seen him in Stratford-on-Avon."

About fourteen years ago, I was in one of the most obscure parts of an English midland county; and calling upon an intelligent village surgeon, was talking with his lady of the visitors who had preceded me. By some chance I mentioned the name of Pemberton. "Pemberton!" she exclaimed, "What do *you* know of Pemberton?" "Very much," said I, "and very pleasant, too: do you, then, know him?" "Oh, yes," she replied: "look at that child," (pointing at the same time, to her sweet little daughter.) "One day, that child had done something of which I disapproved, and I was just raising my hand to beat her for it; when some one rushing in at the door, suddenly caught my arm from behind, and, snatching her up, held her aloft with one hand in the air. Amazed at such interposition, I asked the stranger to explain himself; when he quietly sat down, and discoursed so rationally and tenderly on the treatment of children, that I have never thought of beating one since, and intend never to do so again. He said his name was Charles Pem-

berton, and staid with us to a cup of tea. Our deep regret was that he could not stay longer."

I know many who have either seen him or received letters from him, at Gibraltar, Malta, and the Pyramids, and have heard of his being in regions still more remote and strange,—but always the same man, always doing or saying something to prevent suffering and to make every body about him happy.

His first appearance among us, in Sherwood Forest, was, I think, in 1833 or 1834; and I am not sure that he had not walked down from London on that pilgrimage, in the leisure between two lectures he was engaged to deliver to some literary institution. The visit was repeated; and at Nottingham he was often a guest of the Howitts,—wandering out with them to the most interesting points of the neighbourhood, and giving occasional lectures in the town. It was about this period that, besides his rambles in Birkland, he went to Newstead, Annesley, and Byron's tomb, at Hucknall Torkard, and in the album then kept there wrote himself—*C. R Pemberton, a Wanderer;* and it was in the latter year that he published, in the "Monthly Repository," (then edited by Mr. W. J. Fox,) his "Peep into Sherwood Forest," and a continuation of his "Pel Verjuice Papers,"—the last, so far as they went, a species of autobiography, since incorporated with the memoir by Mr. Fowler.

There has seldom been known a man uniting so vivid a soul with so *convertible* an organism. We often see characters in whom are combined the power to appropriate and re-adapt the imaginings of others; but rarely

without detracting from, rather than fairly representing, their originals. Yet Pemberton, in his readings, gave not only *all* that was worthy of his author, but so threw around the subject the light of his versatile genius, as to enkindle your own,—to awaken "the Shakspere within you," should it be one of Shakspere's dramas,—in such a way as to make all machinery, scenery, adventitious aids of any kind, quite needless: you felt and saw the poet's entire conception represented, with all its vast and varied relations. Upon his simple platform, in the lecture-room of Bromley House, with no machinery but a chair, no drapery but a plain scarf, and none to second him but the ventriloquial spirit within him, he would go through all the best passages of Hamlet, and afterwards through some complicated comic entertainment, with more effect upon a tasteful auditory, than could have been produced by any large company of performers; because there was nothing out of keeping with his own perfect conception of the piece,—no marring by imperfect supporters,—though not one material point of interest would be omitted. His sudden change from some great hero, to an old woman afflicted with the toothache, in a large lone house, on a windy night, with two or three drunken fellows coming home late, and making a disturbance at the door,—and all this without any other addition to the resources first mentioned than his pocket-handkerchief,—was probably one of the most magical transitions ever seen in the world.

Yet, what is remarkable—in all this, or out of it, you never thought of him as of a *player*. Free alike from

the professional stalk and talk of the stage, his bearing, manner, tone, everything about him, bespoke at once the dignity, integrity and kindliness, as well as the amplitude and versatility, of his soul. It was, in the first place, not the duties, but the distrust, of mercantile life, that drove him from his youthful engagement in an office. In the next place, it was the sin and degradation prevailing on board the war-ship that made *it* intolerable to him, and cast him again on shore. So in the last, it was not because he desired an eccentric orbit to move in, but because the popular theatre itself did not "hold the mirror up to nature," that he also shunned it in turn, and chose to go alone in his readings and impersonations.

As mentioned before, the last time I saw him he was at Worksop—announced to lecture, but unable from illness and exhaustion to keep his engagement. The afternoon he passed at Dr. Heldenmaiar's Pestolozzian Institution, and on my being admitted to him he was coming down stairs, but muffled up, hoarse, decrepid, and so different altogether from the springy, spirit-like being I had seen him some few years before, that it required some minutes to identify him with his former self. On our shaking hands, he inquired if I was not aware that he was "already beyond the grave." He rallied a little, however, in the evening, and joined in a pleasant conversation with our party, which included Mr. Thomas Asline Ward, Mr. Edward Bramley, and Mr. L. C. Sayles, of Sheffield; and Mr. Thomas Lister, author of "The Rustic Wreath," &c. I am not aware that any of us saw him afterwards. By a great

effort, he was enabled once more to reach the shores of the Mediterranean, and winter at the Pyramids; but his exhaustion continued, and he came back to England to die. Birmingham, as we have already noted, was the place from which his wanderings commenced, and there they also closed, in the arms of a friend. His body was interred at the Key Hill Cemetery, near that town; where his grave is covered by a simple slab, bearing the following eloquent, touching, and appropriate tribute, by Mr. W. J. Fox; and probably no man was more capable of rightly estimating him:—

BENEATH THIS STONE
REST THE MORTAL REMAINS OF
CHARLES REECE PEMBERTON,
Who died March 3rd, 1840, aged 30 years.

HIS GENTLE AND FERVID NATURE,
HIS ACUTE SUSCEPTIBILITY,
AND HIS ASPIRATIONS TO THE BEAUTIFUL AND TRUE,
WERE DEVELOPED AND EXERCISED
THROUGH A LIFE OF VICISSITUDE,
AND OFTEN OF PRIVATION AND DISAPPOINTMENT.
AS A PUBLIC LECTURER
HE HAS LEFT A LASTING MEMORIAL
IN THE MINDS OF THE MANY
WHOM HE GUIDED TO A PERCEPTION OF THE GENIUS OF
SHAKSPERE
IN ITS DIVERSIFIED AND HARMONISING POWERS.
AT OPPRESSION AND HYPOCRISY
HE SPURNED WITH A FORCE PROPORTIONATE
TO THAT WHEREWITH HE CLUNG
TO JUSTICE AND FREEDOM, KINDNESS AND SINCERITY.
EVER PROMPT FOR GENEROUS TOIL,
HE WON FOR HIMSELF, FROM THE WORLD,
ONLY THE POET'S DOWRY,
"THE HATE OF HATE, THE SCORN OF SCORN,
THE LOVE OF LOVE."

Chapter Fifteenth.

VILLAGES IN SOUTH NOTTS.

HOW different the life and scenery south of Trent from what we have already described on the north! It was on one of those calm winter days that know neither sun nor twilight—that grow light in the morning without any herald, save the cock-crow, and fall rather suddenly away in the evening without any signal, save that of the birds retiring to roost, or the lonely herds-man striding a-field with his foddering fork—that I reached the rural old village of Costock, there to stay, as it happened, for about a month. It was, in fact, during that coldest of all Januaries we hold in remembrance—eighteen hundred and twenty-nine; and on my leaving Nottingham, the river and canal were both so frozen as to admit of no navigation. But notwithstanding the intensity of the frost, there was a slight moist haze in the atmosphere, which gave an indefinite, grey, clumpy appearance to Bridgeford, Wilford, and the other villages looking from among their trees at a distance from the road, and which, by the time I

reached Bunny, had settled on the woods and hedge-rows, a beautiful, motionless mantle of rime. This was an interesting aspect in which to see that fine old village. The general whiteness around made a great brick hunting tower there loom more darkly on the sight; and from among the rustic gables of the ancient farms clustering around, the grey church spire shot up the more distinctly because of the paly foil afforded by their powdered roofs.

Not to linger needlessly on the road between, let me say that a further walk of two miles through the wintry scene landed me in Costock—hospitable old Costock! —and time has since served to strengthen, not efface, the memory of the cordial welcome I met with there. I entered it with smiles, and left it with tears;—and although my sojourning there was thus in the winter, it will ever remain a little Eden on the map of my experience. It was during the last half-hour of day-light that I passed an irregular row of road-side cottages and crossed the bridge at the beginning of the village. Turning through a wicket gate and pursuing a field-path, one of the scenes most delightful to a lover of country pastimes caught my attention—the whole bevy of village lads and lasses engaged in the healthy exercise of sliding on the parish pond; and these joyous juveniles had only to be asked the favour, when half of them simultaneously volunteered to guide me to the house I wanted—one of the most old fashioned and substantial class of cottages, where a cheerful fire, a plentiful meal, and the discourse of friends soon made me as happy as the cricket on the hearth. That even-

ing, like many successive ones, was passed in pleasant intellectual reminiscences, and in the morning I proceeded to explore the village, a brief description of which may not be unpleasing.

The etymology of its name, which has several aliases, is unknown to me—it is, however, as at present pronounced, simply an abbreviation of Cortlinestoke. It is the next village to Bunny, on the Nottingham and Loughborough road, nine miles from the former and five from the latter, and its inn (the Red Lion) was somewhat noted in the departed age of stage-coach travelling. A copious brook flows through the meadows that skirt it on the north side, and its habitations are scattered chiefly along the road that branches to the west from the turnpike. Its "public institutions," if I remember rightly, consisted, when I was there, besides the horse-pond, of the pinfold for stray cattle, the stocks for drunkards, and a row of parish huts for paupers,—besides which were the usual places of village resort—shoe-makers' stalls and blacksmiths' shops in the day-time, and a malt-kiln for long evenings, where the village lads generally assembled to amuse each other with strange stories, and deliberate on other matters appropriate to rustic life. The number of inhabitants was about four hundred—too small to admit of much classification, the natural consequence of which was a good deal of homely intercourse between the rich and poor:—would that such were more common in every part of the country!

But to return. The next morning (the Sabbath,) though sunless, lacked nothing of beauty and quiet, as

I slowly traced the features of the place. Many a substantial farm house was there to be seen, its fold-yard stocked with ruminating, well-fed cattle—silent and happy, as beseemed the day. Many a cottage poured the reek gracefully forth from its mossy chimney in an ever-curling, ever-varying, but continuous column, among the trees of orchards and gardens, so lovelily clad in their pure raiment of hoar-frost. Here and there apart stood mansions of loftier pretensions, including the parsonage, and an ancient manorial-looking house, many-gabled and tall-chimnied; whilst the noiseless inn seemed patiently *waiting* by the road for the passing of the next coach; and not a sound was heard save the pattering of rime from the trees as an occasional bird fluskered among their slenderest branches; until a single bell began to call from its dovecote tower the villagers to worship at their little ivy-mantled church; and then was impressed on my mind with deep effect the genuine character of a rural English Sabbath. At the house of my friend the greatest portion of the day was passed in reading, whilst evening closed over the village nearly as the morning had begun, without anything to break the general repose.

How different the next morning! Before daylight the blacksmith's anvil might be heard ringing for a mile round. The thumping of flails commenced soon after all over the village. Horn after horn of the passing coaches then echoed along the road; and, as if to make up for that quiet which even brutes observe on Sundays, the kine were lowing, pigs were squealing, dogs were barking, and fowls crowing and cackling in

every farm yard; whilst guns might be heard popping the fieldfares from the surrounding hedgerows, and the straggling street was all alive with passengers and children at play; and, to give the rustic *melee* a still busier character, mendicants and hawkers began to arrive with their various equipments; the smoke no longer rose upright in the stilly air as on the previous day, but veered about in every direction; a breeze sprang up and began to scatter the hoar-frost from the trees; and to complete a drama in which everything in or about the village seemed determined to take a part, even the sun himself broke a hole through the fog, and looked and smiled for full half an hour on the scene.

I will not detain you with all my youthful adventures in the rustic society I now found, though some of it was droll and characteristic enough. But I must tell you about my chief companion, George Litchfield, who would have been an honour to any society. Poor George was one of the best and blithest spirits of that or any other neighbourhood. He was, in childhood, my play-fellow at Sutton-in-Ashfield; but had early left that place, with his parents, and now lived in the house in which for the time being I had become domiciled at Costock. It has never been my lot to meet with a more remarkable instance of precocity and versatility: and yet, in his social feelings he was young to the last, uniting the sagacity of maturity to the playfulness of youth. He could converse fluently at twelve or fourteen years of age on subjects of the gravest import—and was familiar alike with metaphysics, mechanics,

and the fine arts. At seventeen he competed for a prize offered by the General Baptist Association for the best Essay on the Life of Joseph, and won it, but never took a copy. He would, however, occasionally oblige his friends by repeating it correctly from memory. His remembrance of language was so excellent, that he could at any time recite correctly what he had read over twice; nor was he by any means less skilled in music. Yet his physical powers were scarcely equal to those of a child; and, without any particular disease, he died of sheer old age, in his twenty-second year, at Hyson Green.

> "His heart was warm, his wit was bright,
> His thoughts were sparks of heavenly light;"

But they soon consumed his body, and blighted the hopes of his friends. In spite of his bodily weakness, he was a lad of considerable courage, and fond of adventure. I have been told that, on one occasion, he was determined to eradicate from the minds of the villagers, at Costock, an old superstitious belief which some of them held, in common with the inhabitants of most country places, that whoever should sit in the porch of the church at twelve o'clock on St. Mark's eve, would see the doors thrown open, and a procession enter of all who were to be married or buried during the ensuing year. He took his fiddle, and went an hour before the stated period, and there he sat till some time afterwards; but as nothing of the reported apparition came, the belief in it, one would suppose, would have been exploded by the experiment. Yet,

some one having sagely attributed its non-appearance to George's fiddle, the notion is still entertained by many who dare not put it to the test.

* * * * * *

Some villages seem to have been made for winter comfort, and others for summer and its lovelier delights. Of the latter is Wilford, on the south bank of the Trent, about a mile from Nottingham—not less famous for its sweet rural aspect than for having once been the frequent resort of Henry Kirk White, in his hours of relaxation,—and of many poets since. The church is a neat and retired little temple; and in time past there was a favourite tree of Kirk White's, near the chancel-end. But it has been long felled, though the spot where it grew is still pointed out in association with his name; and from the end of the villiage-green to Clifton Grove (the scene of his best known poems, and of the popular story of "The Fair Maid of Clifton,") is one of the most delightful walks imaginable—having the river on one side, with a regular and majestic row of elms on the other, extending the whole distance. Of the view from this walk excellent sketches have been taken by Mrs. Enfield, Barber, and (I think) Mr. Robinson, the village schoolmaster, who has a good artistic taste; and it includes the "Old Manor House," which has a terrace jutting into the water, as it gracefully bends round, near the Lower Ford. At that old house I resided for some time myself, in the scanty hours of repose snatched from a life of public toil:—

"Hours more dear than drops of gold."

(Bamford.)

And how pleasant is the memory of those hours now, stealing upon me so far from the scene! The village green, with its noble trysting tree in the midst; the church and rectory standing back in the deep shade; the white villas; the low, thatched cottages; the lapsing river, and the slow-crossing ferry-boat; the gay holiday groups and lonely anglers along its banks; and the gipsies camping in the retired and winding lanes: how quietly but freshly the pictures all yet glow in one's imagination! And then, my sweet, rustic little study within doors! where Philip Bailey, the author of "Festus;" Edmund Larken, the country rector, "whose parish had no bound, except the bound of human sorrow;" Frederick Enoch, author of "Songs of Universal Brotherhood;" John Atkinson, a master in the school where Shakspere learnt penmanship; Richard Howitt, after returning from his wanderings in Australia Felix; old Henry Wild, grave and gentle teacher of teachers, and other dear and worthy friends, would sometimes visit me; while Henry Sutton, author of "Eugene," might occasionally be seen musing along the opposite bank of the river;

> "A sage in youth,
> Hand-in-hand walking
> With Beauty and Truth."

That most pleasant of calenders, "The Book of the Seasons," was partly written in one of the cottages of Wilford; and Thomas Miller, Miss Willans, and other distinguished writers, have made it an occasional retreat, for the sake of its quietude. As the river has no bridge here, and the ferry-boat ceases to ply at an

early hour of the night, the rural manners of the inhabitants have been preserved in a great degree from the leaven of the town; and nothing can be more striking than the contrast of life in so short a transition. There is nothing—absolutely nothing—in the village itself, to denote its proximity to a town, except the great number of dairymen and boys, who, mounted with their milk-pails on ponies, and dressed in the grotesque style of ancient days, form curious, primitive looking groups in the lanes and meadows, as, morning and evening, they depart for and return from Nottingham. Wilford, to have full justice done it, would require a Mary Russell Mitford, or a Mrs. Southey, who, to a native heart and a poet's fancy, could add a limner's skill: for it has much of the character such writers would rejoice in delineating.

I was there in February, 1846, and left one morning when the whole landscape was wrapt in snow and mist. The trees were, of course, without foliage,—the river "dark and drumlie," as Burns would say,—its opposite bank scarcely distinguishable,—and if a solitary wayfarer were met in the meadows, it would seem more like the passing of a ghost or a shadow. My return was on the following Whit-Monday,—a bright, warm, and beautiful holiday, as ever shone on the creation. Standing in front of my dwelling, over which the trees, now in full foliage, waved their leaves in the light, and threw their trembling shadows on the wall and window, I became aware of a boat moored under the out-flung tresses of a willow, at one corner of the terrace; while, down at the other corner, a number of villagers were

washing their sheep. The church reared its venerable head among the elms, at a bend of the stream below; and, from the rooks congregated there, were occasionally sent such deliberate calls, it seemed as they were at ease and keeping holiday too. On the other side of the river might be seen here and there an angler, too far from the rest for conversation, but near enough for companionship, as ever and anon glanced his line on the sparkling water, or a fish leaped up in midstream and sent the light eddies circling to the shore. In the meadows opposite, hundreds of frolicksome children were scattered among the flowers at their games; a hundred pairs were wandering about in maturer communion. Nottingham, with its castle and its spires; Lenton, Wollaton, Beeston, Bramcote, with their villas and woody uplands, stretched away beyond. Farther off still struck up the spire of Sawley towards the sun; and down over all came a flood of clear but soft and golden light, that gave every single object in the landscape its due distinctness and effect. Just at the moment when all this had taken its full possession of the soul, was it that a thrilling and ecstatic finish was imparted, by what in painting would be called "an accident." Lending my attention for a moment to a herd of cattle, crossing the river at the ford and slowly followed by a rustic on horseback, my ear unexpectedly caught a strain of music from a contrary quarter; and looking up the river, in the direction of Clifton Grove, I saw, gaily coming thence, over the fair broad bosom of the waters, a procession of beautifully decorated craft, with the crews dressed

in sailors' uniform and streamers floating free, as they returned triumphantly with a band of musicians from a boat-race at the Ryelands. Some of the earlier companions of my youth were amongst the rowers. Brightly sparkled the feathery spray at every dip of their oars; swiftly shot each prow down the stream and out of sight below; softly and sweetly died the music and their voices in the distance; the sheep-washers were gone, and their flocks were at rest; the mantle of evening descended gently on the scene; and all at length was hushed, save the river's light ripple, and the louder beat of my own swelling heart, as I retired for the night to my quiet room. Who ever saw Wilford without wishing to become an inmate of one of its peaceful woodbined homes? Listen with patience to one of my own aspirations while dwelling there:—

WILFORD! when first I gazed on thee,
Whilst leaning o'er an upland stile,
Thy flooded meads were one vast lake
And thou a little bowery isle!
The lovely view, upon my mind
Impictured then, I bore away;
And thou to me attractive ground
Hast been from that enchanting day.

Time pass'd, but left me not at rest,
Until a pilgrim I had been,
All pensive 'neath thy grey church tower—
All cheerful on thy rural green;
Nor even since have scenes more famed—
More vast or solemn, rich or gay—
Nor all the dreary cares of years,
My feelings won from thee away.

When town-enticements other youth
From nature drew,—than they more grave,
I wander'd where thy whispering elms
Held converse with the passing wave:

While, kindled with a spark from heaven,
Within me glow'd the ecstatic flame
That sent its gleam through future years
To something better far than fame.

And still when every nerve and vein
Was by love's thrilling charm possess'd,
With its dear object here I came,
Again all blessing and all blest;—
And though events have treacherous been
To the fond hopes I cherish'd then,
So genuine were the hopes themselves
Ev'n now I'd cherish them again!

Wilford! whichever way to thee
We come from thy surrounding plains,—
Whether by Clifton's wood-walks dim,
Or Bridgeford's gipsy-haunted lanes;
Or from yon spired and castled town,
O'er meads where flowers in myriads blow;
Thy scenes so beautify the rest,
That all, through thee, more lovely grow!

Dear Village! I have wander'd far,
And much have known and felt and done,
Since first from Lenton fields I saw
Thy waters mock the setting sun,
As up they sent to heaven again
The beams it shed o'er them and thee,
While Spring went softly forth and touch'd
With mellower brightness tower and tree!

From northern seas that dash and foam
On Caledonia's rugged shores,
To where at courtly Brighton's feet
The south its gentlest wavelets pours—
From Lincoln's towers to Cambria's hills—
From Durham dark to fair Carlisle—
I've linger'd 'mid the loveliest scenes
Of this, the ocean's noblest isle!

Trade's proudest seats and throngest ports—
Great London's wonders, glare, and noise—
Old Edinburgh, sage Learning's haunt—
With all their social hopes and joys—

These may, perchance, my mind have built
  Upon a larger, loftier plan;
And yet methinks contentment here
  Had almost made as good a man!

Wilford! how sweet once more in thee
  Awhile to rest this wearied heart,
As holy Peace and Hope and Truth
  Draw near, fresh solace to impart;
While leaves are whispering o'er my roof,
  And waters whimpling softly by;
And thoughts within from sounds without
  Are thus obtaining fit reply.

O! when far hence once more I go,
  On duty's earnest mission bent,
Christ! with thy presence comfort me,
  And strengthen well each pure intent!
And should I e'er again return
  To scenes as these so fair and calm,
In their deep quiet let me find,
  As now, for all my griefs a balm!

Chapter Sixteenth.

OLD COUNTRY MANSIONS.

Evening Dialogue at Ash Farm.

AT a house standing mid-way on the plain between Kirkby and Sutton-in-Ashfield, and at one field's distance from the lane—a place which in local rhymes has been named Ash Farm—there would, a winter or two ago, meet a few neighbours, who in the days of their boyhood had been schoolfellows, or at all events, fellow-readers and ramblers. Their pursuits in after-life had been remarkably various. One had become the tenant of Ash Farm, and had been little from home. Another had settled, after some vicissitude, as the schoolmaster of a neighbouring village. A third was a returned wanderer; and there were one or two others, including the local postmaster and the author of these desultory pages, all of whom, however different their present occupations, had at least a few tastes in common—amongst which might be more especially noted the love of nature, history, poetry, and music.

They had one evening just finished singing together the simple and touching melody beginning—

"After many roving years
How sweet it is to come
To the play-place of our early youth,
Our first, our dearest home!"

When a disquisition arose touching the many memorials of ancient time mingling with the beauties of their own neighbourhood, and especially of such as having small share in any written history, left all the more to tradition and imagination. Of these, among the most prominent were some old mansions; and on them the conversation turned much as follows:

Postmaster—I scarcely know of any greater pleasure, during an occasional stroll, than to catch a glimpse of one of those old manorial halls, as it smiles across its lawn, at its own picture, in the waters of its own little lakelet, or nestles in the umbrage of its ancestral woods. What a solemn yet beautiful emblem of the repose of ages!

Wanderer—Yes, and how doubly pleasant, in one's ramblings about the country, to come with the feeling of an original discoverer, as it were, upon such ivy-gabled, turret-chimnied, strongholds of antiquated fashion—the seats, not of a high-titled, though long-counted race, which, says Washington Irving, "are peculiar to England, and scarcely understood in other countries; that is, families of the ancient gentry, who, destitute of titled rank, maintain a high ancestral pride: who look down upon all nobility of recent creation, and would perhaps consider it a sacrifice of dignity to

merge the venerable name of their house in a modern title." How often, in our perambulations, on gaining the summit of a hill or the edge of an elevated plain, or on the mere turn of an angle in a woody lane, have we been delighted by the sudden appearance of some such retreat, with its old-time gathering of minor but kindred features around it!—not because of any peculiar feudal sympathy on our part, but simply from a principle in our very organisation, impelling us to love and venerate the beautiful and the ancient, without which the earth would be a universal scene of restlessness and change, and man's industrial propensities would turn the whole world into tilled fields and workshops.

Schoolmaster—True; and as, in spite of all our efforts at assimilation, Nature will force mankind into one system or other of classification, what can afford a sweeter pastime than to climb the uplands on some calm, bright holiday, to gaze on the country expanding around, and to trace each mark of patrician grandeur, as well as of humble retirement or industry, dotting its natural beauties?

Farmer—Ay, it is then one calls up in fancy the inhabitants of those old paternal-looking mansions and their outscattered cottages, and so are reminded of the principle of fatherhood as well as of brotherhood in the human family—especially where a good understanding and kindly feeling give life to the neighbourhood, and all classes try to benefit each other without unnecessary meddling.

Wanderer—Good;—but adhesiveness and combativeness, phrenologically speaking, being close neighbours

in the human mind, they are much the same in human society, unless subject to a very high moral or spiritual regulation. Hence, close-drawn attachments frequently imply strong prejudices and antipathies; and by the time that men have grown out of the one class of feelings, they have often grown out of the other also—have become too cosmopolitan to value such a patriarchal compact in its simplicity and purity, and thus are led to sigh for new social arrangements.

Author—Besides, the progress of science, art, and trade, renders some changes inevitable; but if justice between man and man, according to the golden rule of our Saviour, be regarded as the key-note with which all such changes are to chord, the substitution of a new harmony for an old one need not be regretted, since it conduces to the true enjoyment of all. We should none of us like to go back exactly to the feudal ages.

Postmaster—You mean, I suppose, to what I was reading of only yesterday. That time has not long gone by in which the enclosure of the Forest, and the introduction of the spinning-jenny, changed Sutton-in-Ashfield from a long, straggling, one-streeted village of shepherds and small farmers, into an immense brick and tile hive of manufacturing industry. But before those events, amongst the most distinguished objects in the place was a rough, rude, stone-built house, known as the "Old Hall." It was in ancient times the seat of the feudal lords of the place; for, as history informs us, "Jordan de Sutton lived there in the reign of Edward the First, and held the manor of the crown.

by the yearly tenure of fourteen shillings, and rendering homage, suit, and service at the court at Mansfield; besides attending the king's army in Wales, with one man, horse, habergeon, cap of iron, lance, and sword." And there that old house still remains, with a pinfold attached to it, wherein the patriarchal Jordan de Sutton had a right to pound all stray cattle roaming at large in his manor. Of course there are many curious traditions associated with such a place; but the town has so crowded round it, that it has almost lost its rural character, and seems little at home in its situation. Such however, is not of the class of mansions we were first talking about.

Author—Why, scarcely. Brookhill and the Old Hall of Kirkby, for places at hand, would be much better examples; nor should Langton, though so small, be left altogether out of sight.

Farmer—Ay, you always spoke warmly of those scenes: I am sure we should all listen with pleasure were you to tell us what you know about them.

Author—Many years ago, I happened to write a sort of sketch of them, and—

Wanderer—Well, now, don't spoil it with preliminary apologies: let us hear it off-hand, if you have it with you. We shall not be uncharitable in our fault-findings, even if faults abound in it.

Author—Apologises, notwithstanding, and then reads: —"It was a calm and beautiful Sunday afternoon—and from my veriest childhood I have loved a Sunday stroll. There are, I know, very good meaning people who condemn the practice; but before they persuade me to

leave it off, they must convince me that Jesus and his disciples did not walk through the corn-fields on the Sabbath-day; they must cause the brooks to cease running, and the woods to suspend their graceful motion and fold up their foliage—the birds to change their joyous warblings to the tone of a melancholy dirge—and the flowers to close out of their bosoms the sunshine that comes down for them—for me—for all. God appointed the Sabbath for a day of rest, renovation, and that joyous expansion and aspiration of the spirit, that to Him is the most acceptable worship, and some of the best incitements to which we may often find among His own immediate works, where, surrounded by so many evidences of His blest and blessing character, we learn by experience that 'to enjoy is to obey.' Thus, as I have said, it was on one of the Sunday afternoons of my boyhood, that after a walk over Fulwood Hill I came to the ancient farm of 'The Crow Trees,' with its corn-stacks as large and numerous as if they had been accumulated against a seven years' famine; whilst high over head rose a dark mass of foliage, the eyrie of a colony of rooks—the majority of whom were now trailing the distant sky upon some foraging excursion,—an occasional drowsy caw-caw proclaiming that a few had been left in garrison, and that they felt somewhat disturbed by the approach of a passenger.

"Dropping thence by a lane—one-half of which the road had liberally given back to Nature, who had planted her share all over with furze and fern, and many of the flowering shrubs and herbs she loves so

well to grow, young sprouting plantations soon started into view, like masses of kindling emerald; whilst by them arose the tall stately woods—the 'old ancestral groves,' about the outskirts of which nestled one or two white-gleaming, lodge-like homesteads, and glimpses of water shone through the green openings, bright as the eye of day; and thousands of primroses starred with their innocent constellations the darkness of receding shades, where in cool retirement innumerable birds fluskered and sung for love and joy.

"Such are my recollections of the approach to Brookhill, somewhat more, perhaps, than twenty years ago; and very delightful ones they have ever been. But be it understood that this was in the days when childhood just begins to glide into youth, and every new thing we experience adds stature to the mind, instead of wrinkles to the brow; when all that is novel in form, hue, or character, starts upon the soul with a magnitude and a beauty of which our subsequent experience in a wider world prevents any repetition. Many baronial seats and hoary abbeys, with which I have since become familiar, were then unknown to me; and on reaching the gateway of this old rural hall—almost the first of the kind I had seen—my young feelings were such as it would now be not so easy to explain. The house stands at the foot of a slope, very near the margin of the water, that formerly served there as a boundary for Sherwood Forest, being fed by a clear brook, that poured through a low bridge by the gateway, at which I stood with a wondering, inquisitive eye, imagining all beautiful things within; dreaming of a

superior state of life on earth, in which those who moved knew nothing of toil, and grief, and care, but had only to enjoy themselves, and that continually; and contemplating the possibility of a ramble in those grounds for myself, much in the light of an admission to Paradise. The odds would, however, have been, that had any of the domestics seen me peering through the hedges and palings to get fresh views of the building, they would have driven me away, or at all events strongly suspected me, for a young bird-nesting vagabond, breaking the Sabbath—that being precisely the thing for which my good but mistaken old father punished me on returning home in the evening! But the thrashing did not obliterate my pleasurable remembrance of that day, which formed an epoch in my existence I would not have missed either for punishments or rewards; and, even now, I can recall all my childish sensations as the clock-bell in a little turret struck the departing hour; whilst a rustling peacock in the arched boughs above awakened the echoes with his sudden cry; a hound bayed loud and deep in response, and all again immediately resumed that sabbath stillness which made the whole scene more solemnly old than before; the brook only continuing its undulating hum, like a low reverberation of the sounds which had passed away for ever, except in memory!

"Fifteen years elapsed from that afternoon, during which I saw little more of Brookhill Hall than then. Many a time I looked through its glades and longed, until the picture became a *feeling*. True, that part of the house presented to the road, being its rearward

aspect, had little in itself that was engaging; but there was that about the style which bespoke a pleasant front somewhere, and this only whetted my desire more keenly to enter it—adding much to the imaginary beauty of all I could not see. At a point, somewhat above the bridge, there was certainly one little opening to a long-drawn pastoral view, catching, as it receded, one side of the house, the water, a distant bridge, some fine old trees, one or two green plantations, and closing with a half-developed, sunlit object—the old Hall of Kirby, gleaming at the foot of a shadowy hill. It was a lovely picture, even if but a miniature one; and though time added continually to my knowledge of other scenes, from the modest villa to the princely palace, that scene always dwelt where it had first fixed itself, at the beginning of life's remote vista; and through all that afterwards crowded my mind I saw it ever.

"Fifteen years elapsed, and then the friendliness of the owner, D'Ewes Coke, Esq., (one of the first to recognise and most constant to encourage my humble literary efforts,) one day broke and threw open to me the interpretation of my long, long dream, by giving me a free range of the domain. Except that things were on a much smaller scale than childhood's active fancy had painted them, to me all the elements of the charm were there. The walls of one neat room were hung round with miniature armorial emblems; pictures, many of them family portraits, nearly lined one or two others; and specimens of ancient furniture ornamented some of the rest. One of the

paintings, a full length portrait of Charles XII. of Sweden, is by the Swedish artist who painted the original, and must therefore have original merit. He painted it in the house, where tradition says he was a merry soul, and, in spite of his cold native climate, sadly troubled with a spark in his throat, which it always took two or three days' drinking to quench. Thus painted by adjournments, the picture was long in getting finished. It is, however, a very excellent one.

"The house, though much altered and adapted to modern ideas of taste and convenience, retains many signs of its primitive character. I do not know the date of its erection, but imagine it to have been enlarged from one still older. Throsby, who gave a view of it in his edition of Thoroton's History of the County, states that a general register of the parish of Pinxton was preserved in it, of a date considerably anterior to such records as ordained by law. The remains of a moated grange are also pointed out at no great distance; which, from its proximity to the verge of Sherwood Forest, might in its day have been occupied by one of the royal warders; or might not improbably have been a place for the refreshment of the king and his attendants when engaged in the chase.

"Near a corner of the lawn, eastward from the Hall, by the Holly-brook side, is a fine large oak in the full glory of its growth, the more worthy of mention because of a parasitical mountain ash which has been rooted in the top of its bole for more than fifty years, yet has never grown to the dimensions of the human

hand! A few generations back, near the same spot, and still closer to the brook, grew another oak, the finest, not only on the estate, but in the whole neighbourhood. Tradition describes it as a monarch of a tree—one of the last of that part of the Forest, perhaps spared for the rarety of its size; but the then miller of Pinxton obtaining leave from Mr. Coke's ancestor (who was absent in Worcestershire) to cut one down wherewith to make a wheel-shaft, and the boon being granted without any specific instruction as to which it should be, he modestly felled that in question, that, besides furnishing a shaft, enabled him to make the entire mill as good as a new one! But now the mill has vanished too, having recently been destroyed by fire.

"A short distance over the brook, on a soft green slope with a south-western aspect, formerly stood two trees, with a seat between them. Here, one fine day, sat the late Professor Jardine, of Glasgow, quietly musing on the prospect before him. Directly from his feet spread the pastoral meadows, in which the brook now lost itself to his sight, and anon flashed out into little ponds, bright and beautiful as off-casts from the sun, lying among the verdure; and a scattering of handsome trees, with cattle gathered in their shade, gave to the foreground a somewhat park-like charm. Beyond this stretched the village, in some places partly obscured by small woods and copses, and in others calmly and coyly shewing the gables of its little lime-washed homes, and rearing its church tower apart. The next undulation displayed still greater

signs of population, but too far removed to rob the landscape of its rural character—great masses of green foliage completely hiding the steam-engines from which, stately and slow, thick pillars of smoke ascended far into the else clear sky; and other churches and villages at wide intervals just protruded their heads from the bosoms of the slopes, or formed picturesque coronals to the open uplands. Farther away, and farther still, the faint blue lines of hills seemed to file along the horizon, and then bend round again on the left, growing bold as they came nearer—the dark tower of Selston church forming a crest for the nearest; while down immediately by his side, was the old house of Kirkby in quiet repose; and advancing, as it were, from the woody slopes on his right, with a patrician, but not haughty or flaunting air—an aspect conscious of some merit it did not want unduly to obtrude—Brookhill gave to the scene its cheerful smile. Such was the view, and such the circumstances under which the Professor contemplated it, till, as it mapped itself upon his memory, he rose and declared with considerable animation, that it was the most complete rural picture he had ever beheld."

Farmer—And now what have you to read us about Langton?

Wanderer—How the importance you attach to these places disposes one to smile! For what they are, I grant you, they are most pleasant rural retreats; but really the country abounds with such, from shore to shore.

Postmaster—Lovely the land, then, in which such scenes are not remarkable!

Farmer—True: go on! They have charms for the untravelled of which the travelled are apt to lose all idea. All earthly greatness is but comparative.

Author—Certainly, very little can be said about Langton. Still while talking of the neighbourhood at all, it were sacrilege not to give it a glance and a word. [Reads again.] "Let us approach it by way of Kirkby. There are few more complete old villages, to my thinking, than Kirkby-in-Ashfield, towards the outskirts of whose parish these houses stand, and the pleasantest way to which is a walk over 'the Cow-pastures.' The open fields known by the latter rustic name are a species of common-right in which the humbler class of cottagers have, I believe, some direct advantage, and a very strange, wild-looking, but pastoral little region they form. Owing to the hawthorn hedgerows by which they are intersected never having been pleached, or repaired, since the very remote day at which they were planted, gaps as wide as gateways occur in them at about every two or three yards; and as those which have managed to overget early neglect have shot up to a most extraordinary growth, this belt of land, lying westward from the village, has gained the appearance of a forest of hawthorns. A foot-road through this brings us at once to a sight of the trees that embower Langton, and to an extensive and beautiful prospect filling exactly an unbroken half of the horizon, including in its range the hills of Wirksworth and Matlock. The house is nearly hidden from the road, but when approached is found to be a neat little residence, in the style of a forest-lodge, and bearing about it some

features of antiquity. The Erewash flows away, from the foot of the slope on which it stands, through one of the richest mineral valleys in the kingdom, and of course the view is not without the disfigurement of steam-engines and coal-pits. These, however, may be forgiven, because of their redeeming contrasts. Opposite is the rural hamlet of Kirkby Woodhouse crowning a very steep and green ascent, and the valley soon widens out till its character is lost in the landscape; whilst even those objects which in the day-time may be deemed deformities, give to the whole country at night the appearance of a romantic land, lit up with glowing beacon-fires as far as the eye can reach. This is the consequence of every coal-yard lighting up a great fire at night; and the iron-works belching forth their perpetual blaze, being generally outshone during the day, but after sunset sometimes assuming the appearance of distant volcanoes, that illuminate the clouds until they appear more like flame than vapour."

Schoolmaster—And now let us hear what you think of the old Hall of Kirkby, or, as it was named in former time, Sachaverill Hall; and tell us about the road to it, as well.

Postmaster—Ah! that road. Did you never *feel* how much more ancient are some even common roads than others? Did you never observe what irregular patches of waste land there are associated with odd curvatures —russet-green brambly banks, and profuse bushy hedge sides—with a sudden turn and an abrupt descent always occurring together—about an old English road? I have, many a time. And in a country abounding with

mansions and churches, and scatterings of woodland, it is almost impossible to walk along them unaccompanied by visions of the trains that have trodden them before.

Author—You have almost hit upon my own description; for—as I have written—"The hoary pilgrim with his staff, the minstrel with his harp, the palfrey-mounted franklin, and the page-attended lady, with now and then a harnessed knight, contrasting well with the peddling merchant, and the grotesquely clad mendicant, or the cowled priest from a neighbouring abbey—these are of the characters that wind along through the imagination, whenever one loiters about such old country lanes as that passing Langton down to Kirkby Old Hall. It was a warm, sunshiny evening, twenty-six or seven years since, that I first discovered this latter memorial of past ages. I say *discovered*, because of coming upon it suddenly, without previously knowing anything of its antiquated character, its architecture or its story; and the first glance of it touched me with a feeling of sudden and immediate contact with times remote, a sort of denizenship in some different and long departed age. Looking at the fine ruins of the Abbey Church at Newstead, or of the Manor Castle at Wingfield, acquaints one very minutely with ancient days: but then, we do not feel in that case as if living in those days, because the ruins themselves give one such a sense of the long period of untenable desolation associated with their history. But here was a mansion, though hardly so large as many a modern farm-house, as old as either of those places,

and bearing about it all the marks of true English gentility,—of a rank sufficiently sheltered to escape the commotions under which *their* tall heads had been crushed—nearly perfect as on the day it was built—its lawn smooth-shaven, its flower-beds newly weeded and trimmed, the renewed woods around it in their very prime, and its windows repeating the laughing sunshine, that made all around appear as cheerful and seasonable as a scene of to-day!"

Wanderer—And do you think then, that with all this freshness about it, the building could really be quite as old as you have imagined it?

Author—Well, listen:—"There it was in its oaken frame—underbuilt, it is true, to give it longer perpetuity, and its quaint windows somewhat altered from their most primitive style;—but in the lath and plaster, of which its upper story was partly constructed, and in its five or six buttress-like chimneys bulging out from the bottom of so many side-walls and gables, and then tapering up apart, as it were, to a greater height than the body of the building, it was as true to the taste of its original architect, as if he had lived to watch it ever since its foundation. And, as to finish, it was a perfect picture: its walls clean and lime-washed—its nail-studded door opening to the green terrace—the brook murmuring below, and an old bridge at an angle of its little enclosure, over which passed the road that instantly turned out of sight up the hill, with a market-woman in a red cloak just vanishing at the same point—and a wreath of smoke ascending high from one of the said grotesque chimneys—to

the whole of which the woody upland behind formed a most capital foil. I could have prayed at that moment to be inspired with a painter's powers and a poet's eloquence to tell how pleasant it was thus to retire a while, and live amid the secluded scenes of an olden day, without paying the penalty of being enslaved by its superstitions or its terrors."

Schoolmaster—I believe it is the oldest house belonging to the family of Coke in the neighbourhood, and to them it descended by inheritence from the De Kirkby's through the Sachaverills, in consequence of a marriage with a female of the latter—the last of her race—by one of the Cokes of Worcestershire, several generations back.

Author reads—"The house, being at present used as a private residence, is not, I believe, at all open to strangers. Once, however, I was conducted through it, and was interested in finding how much of its interior character had been preserved. Carved cabinet furniture, the work of by-gone centuries; wide stone hearths which had never known a grate, with daggers hung above them for chimney ornaments; and quaint, oddly significant inscriptions, painted or carved, about the dusky rooms—all told tales of other years; and amongst many curious relics was the indispensable 'black jack,' a great leathern ale vessel, formerly so much in request on all hospitable and mirthful occasions."

Schoolmaster—Better kept—I should say—as a memorial than for use.

Farmer—Still one cannot but respect any relic of

olden hospitality: so let us hope that for every usage of the kind laid aside, a better one may come into fashion, and keep the social compact as strongly knit as in those jovial days.

Author—Thus shall our old patrician landmarks long remain—not, as in Ireland, the crumbling monuments of rapine, desolation, and extortion; but examples among the homes of the people of rural dignity, beauty, and taste.

Wanderer—Yes;—and though I am still persuaded that, from intense local attachment, you are all given to over-rating these native scenes, they do afford at least an average idea of the beauty of our country generally. You may certainly call Brookhill a lovely scene, without exaggeration; and our conversation altogether brings to mind a sonnet I have somewhere read, which says—

To stroll at stintless ease through some wild dell,
  Companion of the brook whose song ends never;
Or climb and rest by the clear upland-well
  Of that rejoicing brook the joyful giver;
  Then gaze far, far abroad, on rock, and river,
And wood, and field, and all the manifold charms
Perfecting England's beauty;—halls, and farms,
  And villages with heavenward-gleaming spires,
And happy animate things that move in swarms
O'er scenes the softest summer-sunshine warms;—
  O! this is pastime sweet that never tires;
But more enjoyed, the enjoyer more excites
To revelry in its sublime delights—
  Waking and gratifying rapt desires!

Chapter Seventeenth.

OLD WATER MILLS.

Evening Second.

SCHOOLMASTER—Well, granting all you said the other evening, as to those mansions we were talking of being small, even diminutive, as compared with a great number as old and as interesting within even a short day's ramble, what would you say about our local water-mills?

Wanderer—Why, to say that the old water-mills of Nottinghamshire surpass, or even equal all others in that antique and grotesque interest which makes them such favourites with tourists and landscape painters, would be incorrect. That primitive, yet artificial rudeness which the imagination ever loves to blend with the picturesque—that undefinable something in country scenery which appeals to our sense of originality, and never catches our attention without awaking in an instant some humorous thought, some smile within—is always most abundant and remarkable in mountainous districts.

Author—Yet how many instances could be pointed out, between the Erewash and Doverbeck, of old mills with patchwork walls and mossy roofs, that have maintained a quiet standing, longer even than that of the parish churches, and sounded their monotonous clack to the slow and dreamy march of nearly a thousand years! Many of these, if they do not rival their contemporaries of the Derbyshire cloughs, or the ravines of Northern and Western Britain, in the wildness of their situations, have still a good deal of the same originality of architecture—the same curious antiqueness of construction in their well-worn wheels—and, above all, that necessary proximity to some beautiful glimpse of water, lying like a patch of fallen sky in the green and bowery valley—which, under any circumstances, affords a more than welcome charm. Indeed, in this one last particular they often far excel. The mill stream of the mountains comes down in a foaming torrent, so profuse throughout the year that a reservoir is seldom needed. That of the lowlands, on the contrary, requires husbanding a little; hence, whenever a mill is denoted by the rising of its clump of grey buildings from the bottom of one of our valleys, a pond—sometimes so large as to deserve the name of a lakelet—is also sure to be seen expanding in the sunshine, clear as crystal and serene as the light, its margin fringed with luxuriant verdure: and if the rush and clatter of the works be temporarily stayed, the waters playfully escaping by some sparkling wear, as if overjoyed to find a way once more into their natural channel, which may be seen winding away, as far as

the eye can reach, accompanied by its train of light willows, or dusky alders.

Schoolmaster—Exactly! You have almost described the very scene down in the valley between Kirkby and the Woodhouse—at all events as it was before the new railway was made. I have often lingered to look back over it, where the infant Erewash, after leaping down from pond to pond in the Rectory grounds, goes throbbing through the fields like a joyous pulse, to join that other little stream from the Grives. The old mill standing down there must have clattered for many ages before the castle at the top of the hill was blown up in the civil wars—or probably before our old church spire began to gleam over the landscape.

Farmer—I suppose you all remember the old Abbey Mill at Newstead.

Wanderer—Ay, who that had once seen would wish to forget it? On returning home, I found that it had been destroyed—a step, it might be, from some cause advisable: but when one thinks of its services through so many centuries—how it was wont to receive the corn of the wealthy and change it into meal for the poor—it is impossible to avoid feeling something like positive veneration for its memory.

Postmaster—One might almost think, from your bias for things monkish, that you were a Roman Catholic.

Wanderer—Not so; nor do I go to the other extreme. It is merely that observation and reflection rub off some of one's prejudices. It is the modern custom to charge the monks of old with unholy thrift, craft, and sensuality, because they left behind them such fruitful

domains. But the fact tells quite as much for their industry and management, as it does for their luxury. No doubt, they did many things *we* would not like (now-a-days especially) to be implicated in. But when one thinks of the wilderness Newstead must have been before they set themselves to work in it—its hills an uncleared forest, and its valleys stagnant marshes, overrun with all kinds of vermin and reptiles—and then of the noble place they must at last have left it; its hills grazed by herds and flocks, or reduced to tillage; its meadows productive of the richest provender; its marshes changed into beautiful lakes; its towers rising sublimely from the bosom of luxuriant gardens; and that old mill, that must have ground fifty times more corn than would be wanted by themselves if they ate a tithe of the other good things their enemies charged them with; we cannot stifle the conviction that they were much more honourable, industrious, patient, persevering and charitable men—*better* men, in many senses of the word, than they are often represented to have been. But we were talking of mills, not of monks and monasteries.

Postmaster—At the end of the lake at Rufford, the Abbey Mill still clacks as of yore in the greenwood shade; there are several, too, on the little river Greet, in the neighbourhood of Southwell; and sounds and glimpses of many others, equally ancient and rural, come crowding on the memory while we are talking. By the way, do you remember Goldthorpe Mill, and one or two others, where that rivulet winds so beauti-

fully down from Roche Abbey, and glides through the orchards and pastures of Oldcotes?

Schoolmaster—Ha! the orchards and pastures of Oldcotes! What sort of place is that?

Wanderer—Why, there is something in the very name of Oldcotes that makes one think of ancient thatched cottages half smothered in orchards and gardens, and grey hovels with loose cart wheels reared up against their ends, and barns with long ladders hung horizontally on their wall-sides, and pigeon-cotes, stuck up at the very points of the house gables—all arrayed round large farm-yards with plenty of cattle and pigs and poultry in them, and singing milk-maids and bawling herd-boys, with every detail of rustic life.

Author—And then, of necessity, we should place it in a valley, in the neighbourhood of ancient woods and parks, and clothe its fields with all the richness that ages of tillage would bestow.

Wanderer—Furthermore, you would give it a clear winding stream, as a matter of course, gliding between the most verdant banks, and under what John Clare calls "mossy-arched brigs;" while, to deny it a mill would be as preposterous as to imagine any old English village deficient of a blacksmith's shop or a pinfold.

Author—Well, that with some slight additions, is just the picture. Imagine yourselves there with me; and let us suppose that it is in the soft, calm dawn of a morning in early summer. There shall have been a sprinkling of rain over-night, and a thin film of vapour is dissolving in the strengthening sunbeams. The lark is up, with its loud and rapturous song. Sweetly,

too, swells the blackbird's melody in yon orchard all a-glow with bloom; the throstle responds as cheerily from the far-off grove; and the smaller birds add to the harmony from every bush and tree around; whilst a bright, curvetting little waterfall, formed by a liberal overflow of the mill-dam, lends its under-song to the concert that has been thus awakened through the valley.

Farmer—Ay; one may not only imagine, but positively *feel* such a scene, in such a season.

Schoolmaster—And what can be more delicious than to watch an old English village awake from its night's repose, and gradually assume the gentle life that characterises a summer morning—such a summer-morning as that described by Thomas Miller, in his poem of that title? But finish your picture.

Author—Yes, mark how it *grows*. The "cock's shrill clarion" resounds through the long straggling street—or rather, inhabited lane—and the woodman pegs his door and trudges off to his work with his wallet and mittens slung over his shoulder;—how easy to count his heavy footsteps as he paces along! Now operations in yon road-side smithy are commenced, and the welkin is filled with the clangor of the anvil. It ceases at length, and a pleasant confusion of farm-yard voices is heard, nearly absorbing the melody of the birds that before was heard so loud and sweet. Next, out goes a lass, just blushing into full bloom, with a bright-scoured milking-pail under her arm, to the fields; and here comes a rustic lad, following a lowing herd slowly from the fields towards the village, whistling, as he saunters

on, the air of "The ploughman o'er the lea." And at last you hear a short, though measured, *gush-gushing* sound superseding the long low hum of the waterfall by the mill, as the miller gives the current of the stream a different turn, to put it in motion, that it may beat steadily on, the unwearied heart of the scene, through the day; whilst the merry laugh of children is heard abroad—the sun shines out in its fullest splendour—and all which before was active is sinking to repose, as all that slept seems bursting into new and joyous life and activity. Such was what I once myself saw at Goldthorpe Mill, by Oldcotes; and the miller who then resided there was as worthy and intelligent a man, as the scene he moved in was beautiful and characteristic.

Postmaster—And do you remember the old "King's Mill," between Sutton-in-Ashfield and Mansfield?

Author—Quite well. It was at the bottom of a very deep dell, on the side of the road, equally distant from the two towns, and about the loneliest building between them. It is believed, by many that it got its name from the miller there, in the reign of Henry the Second, having arrested that king, upon suspicion of his being a deer-stealer. My own belief is that it was so called from being the manor-mill—the manor being a royal one.

Schoolmaster—Though with a few anachronisms—such, for instance, as introducing guns, which were a much later invention,—Robert Dodsley has embodied the popular idea pleasantly enough in his play of "The King and the Miller of Mansfield."

Wanderer—I have never seen it: what is the plot?

Schoolmaster—The King being lost near Hamilton Hill, (then all wooded with oaks, not as now with larches,) for the first time in his life finds out the difference between a flattered monarch and a common man left to his natural resources, and while musing on the contrast is seized by John Cockle who, being a keeper as well as a miller, uses him very roughly, and denies that he can be a legitimate hunter since he has got no horse. After some dialogue, the miller takes home his prisoner and introduces him to his wife Kate, his daughter Margery, and his son Dick; the latter of whom being unexpectedly returned after a long absence, the miller is so pleased to see, that in rushing to embrace him, he nearly knocks down the king, who, however, takes all in good part, for two reasons—first, because he has no alternative, without making himself known; secondly, because he feels inclined to enjoy the adventure. Being also invited to partake of their humble meal, his majesty is urged to eat heartily, and to make himself as welcome "as if he were a prince." The miller then fills up the mugs with brown october, and asks his guest to join him in drinking health to King Harry, which is readily acceded to; and whilst the courtiers are vainly seeking their master in the woods, and a love affair is ripening to its climax at the mill, by way of under plot, the whole of the party grow right jolly together, and Joe, the miller's man, treats them to a song, by no means complimentary either to kings or courtiers. The King still takes all in excellent humour however; and whilst a conversation is

going on amongst them relative to Dick's pretty sweetheart, who, it turns out, has been abused by one of the creatures of the court, this very courtier himself is brought into the house in custody of some keepers, being mistaken, like his master, for a deer-stealer; and the rank of the stranger is immediately made known. The miller now repenting of the rough usage he has given the King, falls down in fear before him as he is drawing his sword. Instead, however, of being killed on the spot, according to his expectation, the miller is knighted, and ordered to rise; Dick and his sweetheart are of course made happy; whilst the courtier who has injured her receives the royal censure; and Sir John Cockle is pensioned with a thousand marks for his loyalty, with which the drama closes.

Wanderer—However much the dramatist may have embellished this story to fit it for the stage, there is no doubt of its main incidents having been current from a very remote period.

Schoolmaster—True. It is supposed the ballad from which he chiefly obtained them was composed long before the invention of printing;—and that some portions of the mill, as it recently stood, was of an older date than of the reign of Henry II. there can be no question. Not only for its legendary associations, but for the antiquity of its appearance, and the picturesqueness of its position, have I often lingered in my youthful days and looked down upon it from the road with true delight. There it stood, a low dusty-grey pile, under the bosom of a fresh green bank that guarded its dam above, bearing the marks of innumerable alter-

ations and repairs. At a short distance foamed the little river Maun, in a beautiful fall between mossy rocks, and flowed on by a pleasant shrubbery, catching the waters of a small cascade by the way, that fell like liquid silver from a rock beneath the road. John Cockle's house was incorporated with the mill, and in later times had ceased to be a residence, a neat little cottage having been erected for that purpose in the shrubbery. Ancient broken wheels and worn-out mill-stones were reared against the grey old walls, or scattered about the yard. An ample barn and its inferior appendages shewed that agriculture, if not forest-keeping, was combined with the miller's avocation after the days of Sir John Cockle. And with such a lovely primrosed slope on one hand as I scarcely ever elsewhere saw; and so many quaint traits and memorials of primitive life on the other; with the brook calmly gliding away through its centre into other and far different scenes; whenever the dell of the old King's Mill and its romantic associations recurs to my memory, such feelings are sure to arise with it as it is sweet to cherish —only that out of them will grow a pensive regret that future times can see no trace of what it was in those gone by.

Postmaster—Certainly there is a wonderful contrast between the scene as it is now, and as it was in my own memory.

Farmer—Not greater, I should think, than that between the respectable Quaker who now occupies the mill and Sir John Cockle!

Author—The first remarkable innovation on this primitive scene was sometime in the year 1818-19, when a viaduct was thrown across the dell, to carry over it the Mansfield and Pinxton railway. Other alterations soon followed and robbed it gradually of its ancient character. Some years ago was built a formal brick house overlooking it from the side opposite to the road, and a steam-engine was added about the same time to the mill. But every trace of these, and of all before described, was fated to obliteration by one vast change —one of the most striking instances of agricultural enterprise ever known in the country. By the depression of trade, commencing with "the panic" of 1836-7, a great number of stocking weavers were thrown out of work at Sutton and Mansfield. These the Duke of Portland engaged to build a strong earthen bank across the valley, by which it was turned into one immense reservoir of water for the irrigation of his newly cultivated lands far down in the forest. More than seventy acres of land became inundated by this process in the course of a single winter: and now the coot and the water-hen may be seen scudding and dipping over the place where the King of England is said to have eaten beans and bacon with the Miller, whilst a modern steam-mill and villa have superseded, at a short distance, the antique water-mill which was supposed to have clacked almost without interruption from the days of the Saxons till the year 1838.

Schoolmaster—Though generally associated with the name of Mansfield, the principal portion of the old

mill stood in the parish of Sutton; and I well remember that, during a procession of the inhabitants of the latter place, in maintenance of their parish boundaries, a trifling sum of money was given to some one for climbing over the roof and swimming across the dam, as a memorial.

Farmer—So much for the familiar scenes around us. Perhaps some of you who have travelled will tell us of others, by way of contrast.

Author—Yes: it is not well to be too limited either in our observations or feelings to one locality, or even one country.

Schoolmaster—No, nor to one world!

Author—Perhaps, then, our wandering friend will give us a glimpse of something beyond the accustomed horizon. How did you feel on first leaving Sherwood Forest, and going to get a sight of the sea? I have heard you say that, to you, the world has been a very different one ever since.

Wanderer—It is a simple story; but you shall hear it if you like.

All—Yes, yes; let us hear it!

Chapter Eighteenth.

TRIP TO THE SEA-SIDE FROM SHERWOOD FOREST.

(THE WANDERER'S NARRATIVE.)

TO gaze on the "ever solemn and majestic sea" had been one of the most constant and devout hopes of my youth. The sublime allusions to it in Scripture—its frequent occurrence as a similitude of vastness, and might, and grandeur, in things relating to the Omnipotent—had prepared me to behold it with deep-felt awe and admiration The fact of its being the element from which our native country had reaped chief of that greatness and glory which distinguish it among nations, with all the stirring incidents of maritime adventure that had formed a considerable portion of my early reading, added also to the charm: and then there was all the poetry which had been drawn from it by bards of every age, with countless other superb associations, to swell the glowing interest of a brief communion with the "ever solemn and majestic sea!"

It was on a fine midsummer morning that I crossed the old borders of our Forest on the trip by which I was to consummate this long and deeply-cherished hope. Yon magnificent Hall of Hardwick looked proudly down upon me as I passed; and Bolsover Castle I saw gazing over the country afar; while Chesterfield Spire beckoned me on with its twirling finger through the landscape, till I met with the "Champion" Nottingham and Manchester coach, where the turnpike road descends into the valley at Hasland. Mounted at ease on that famous locomotive, I had a glorious opportunity of surveying the country, as it toiled along among the hills which soon hid us from Chesterfield, or rather it from us; and as the dales and cloughs of the Peak opened one after another to view, many happy sensations successively flushed over my mind, and rendered the journey an ever-varying source of delight. To have been whirled through such scenes by railway would have been mere tantalization and vexation of spirit. The mountains in that case would not have skipped for joy like rams, nor the little hills like lambs; for they would have seemed all to be scouring along, rapid and confused, as if chased by wolves. As it was, however, when the coach slowly wound with its admiring passengers, quietly and deliberately round some upland's side, creation seemed to glow in repose and contentment beneath; and as sometimes it would descend more speedily into a gradually opening valley, all nature around seemed to dance for gladness.

On first gaining the level of "the moors," as the vehicle sped somewhat more swiftly but gently on,

there was a dreaminess in the feelings that made it for a moment seem as though the coach were a gliding bark, entering upon a voyage over a sea of hills. But this species of enchantment soon subsided before another. We dropped into the valley of the Derwent, near Baslow; the fairy Hall of Chatsworth was seen through the foliage on our left; wild, craggy, cloud-bearing hills were towering on the right; the river was winding its bright course among the green meadows below; and at every turn of the road new beauties were bursting into sight. Stoney Middleton, with its pretty little hall, the seat of Lord Denman, and a church as pretty, and proportionably as small, by its side; its primitive old inns and irregular streets of grotesque cottages and workshops, occasionally intersected with some modern building of more genteel pretensions, followed next; and then came Middleton Dale, with its far-famed Lover's Leap; its spiral, and turreted, and minaretted rocks and arched caverns: its clefts, its quarries, and its babbling streams. Passing for the first time through Middleton Dale, was, to me, like passing through a dream about enchanted castles, ruined churches, and oriental mosques and monuments. To describe it is impossible. Its impressions were most wild and vivid. I have never known them surpassed but once, and that was by the self-same objects, one moonlight night. O! that was a beautiful, unearthly, visionary night to me! But we must not linger to talk about it now. We were going by coach to Liverpool.

Emerging from the top of the Dale once more into

the open country, we soon found the hills ranging for miles and miles around us, naked of foliage, but green and bright as domes and cones of glowing emerald. It was here as we drew on, over the site of the old Peak Forest towards Chapel-en-le-Frith, catching a glimpse of the noble church of Tideswell by the way, that I first felt the full emphasis of the district's name of *The Peak Country*—for truly it is a country of fine green peaks, that know nothing so lofty and fair as themselves beneath the sky!

The bleak mountain town of the Chapel was past; we descended soon after, parallel with the High Peak Railway, towards Whaley Bridge; and I have an indistinct recollection of seeing there a finely wooded and watered valley, interspersed with towns, and hamlets, and halls, and churches—a region over which nature and commerce seemed to have nearly equal sway, giving to the scene a busy but happy character.

And now we were in Cheshire, and indications of the neighbourhood of a populous manufacturing district began to crowd thick and more thickly upon us. Railways had not become very general then, and carts and drays, toiling along beneath their lofty burdens of merchandise, had exhibited themselves pretty numerously even on the Derbyshire side of the valley; but now they formed one continued train for miles; the turnpike assumed more the character of a street than a country road; the "rattitat, rattitat" of the weaver's loom was heard and answered from house to house; ragged children came alongside the coach, performing various tricks *a la* Merry Andrew, to win halfpence

from the passengers; and we found ourselves rolling through a place which, in a joke, commercial men are apt to ask novices if they have ever visited—a long, dingy, brick-built village called Bullock Smithy. It appeared that some of the more sentimental inhabitants of the place, growing tired of its ancient ineuphonious name, had recently erected a public notice that it should be called Hazel Grove. It was, however, so little akin to a Hazel Grove, that the new name seemed by far the most absurd of the two.

But how different now was all the country to that we had just passed through—and how different the road! The turnpike here became almost as level as a plaster floor; the coach increased its speed; the milestones, on which we had previously time to spell every letter, now made a mere twinkle as we swiftly passed them; and presently we plunged into the smoke and noise and bustle of Stockport. It was a strange-looking place to me, that Stockport. I thought it one of the dirtiest, dingiest, smokiest scenes on earth, as there can be little doubt that it is one of the most industrious.

All the distance between Stockport and Manchester was as throng as a town-street, with bipeds, quadrupeds, and vehicles of every grade and condition; and "business, business," rather than repose, seemed to be stamped on the front of all the villas, of which there is a continuity on both sides of the way, from one place to the other. So numerous were those houses, and so rapidly did every one seem to drive from and to them, that I could only imagine them the nurseries

of business-plans and contrivances, which were immediately taken to the town to be put into execution. How different from the lonely, retired homesteads of Sherwood Forest or of the Peak we had just left behind us!

Then, when came Manchester, with its myriads of towering chimneys, its many-storied factories and warehouses—so vast, so countless, so defiant of all comparison,—its streets, in one part so throng and extensive and market-like; in another so quiet and long and regular, composed entirely of warehouses, with innumerable windows, row above row,—and its turn-out, at given hours, of streaming crowds of people, by far the sublimest sight to me of all,—all tended to overwhelm the mind with a sense of England's important character as a manufacturing and commercial nation. Although I have an exceeding love of rural beauty and quiet, and could linger days and months, nay, years, amid the fresh green recesses of the country; I look on art, too, as a higher nature developed through the agency of man, and therefore not only worthy, but demanding much of our attention, and study, and sympathy. With these views, I have often, in the calm hours of solitude and peace, turned my thoughts to the mighty number of our fellow-beings who, obedient to some grand instinctive impulse of invention or creation, have opened sources of industry unknown to their fathers, and have multiplied themselves together in masses, depending all the while upon those sources for subsistence: and then I have grieved that after such elements have been by unerring natural

laws brought into operation, men should not have faith in them, but should strive to shackle and render them impotent, by short-sighted and distrustful restrictions. If, then, thoughts like these would animate me during my own quiet avocations and rambles in my native fields and woodlands, amid the simple scenes of agricultural life; with how much force were they calculated to rush through the mind, when first Stockport, then Manchester, and afterwards Liverpool, in two consecutive days, opened to my observation their mighty energies and capacities?

After visiting the Athenæum, the College Museum, and several other places of public interest in Manchester, an hour and a half's ride by railway took me into Liverpool. The entrance by the rail into Liverpool was through a tunnel which ran into the very heart of the town. I had gone thus far on the same principle upon which I would have taken a country stroll—that is, without any introduction, or any other aim than to gratify my love of observation: so that emerging from the station, at the tunnel end, I found myself in one of the busiest thoroughfares in Europe, alike unknowing and unknown, and scarcely acquainted with a single inn or street in the town. The water-side, however, was the point I most desired to gain; and on enquiring of a policeman the way to it, he directed me up Dale-street.

Many years have gone by since the occasion of which I speak, so that my memory retains less of the individual features of the scene, than a general impression of their combined effect, as I eagerly advanced to

the side of the Quay, to feast my gaze on the Port of Liverpool—which, taken for all in all, is, as we are told, one of the throngest and completest in the world. Never was a calmer, brighter, lovelier afternoon. If a single cloudlet dimpled the sky, it was only that by the contrast of its smiling silveriness, attention might be directed to the richness and depth of the heavenly expanse of blue around it, from which the glad eye reverted to the equally blue waters below, crisped into light riplets by the gentlest airs, and overscattered by countless craft, that moved like things of life upon its surface. The river (if river it could there be called) appeared about a mile in breadth; on the opposite shore rose the towns of Egremont and Woodside, (Birkenhead was not then built.) and townlets and villas innumerable, some dipping down to the water's edge, others stretching up a pleasant rising country, and gleaming in the sunshine like habitations of beauty and joy; while far up to the south, or south-west, perhaps beyond the lovely course of the Dee, a dim stretch of mountains bounded the prospect. O! it was a rapturous bewilderment that took possession of the mind, as I contemplated for a few minutes that superb panorama—the little skiffs with their white sails gleaming—the steamers departing and advancing—the ship at rest on the water's breast—round which the gull's bright wings were glancing. Bless me! why I am involuntarily rhyming for joy while talking about it!—Then, what an animated scene did the Quay itself present! —the ferry-steamers landing and leaving every few minutes, receiving or debarking their passengers or

pleasure seekers that all moved off in a crowd, only to make way for as many more fresh faces on the spot immediately; so that as wave succeedeth wave and knows not the form of its forerunner, is it with the shoals of people that supersede each other continually there.

Yet however rapid or varied my emotions might be upon gazing on such a perpetually moving spectacle, they soon resolved themselves into a more settled character of astonishment and exultation when I turned and looked, right and left, at the interminable forests of masts that rose in the docks from the congregated barks of every earthly clime. Of the multifarious scenes of my native land that have won my eye, between the cottage-hearth and the mountain's crown, I had never in my wanderings or sojournings seen so much to make me proud of being an Englishman as was concentrated here—a peaceful assembly of the true ministers of civilization, to which every country in the world had sent its representative on the broad wings of the wind! Nor were the lofty rows of warehouses, nine stories high, running alongside these docks I suppose for miles, less astonishing for their magnitude, than were the vessels for their numbers. Making the most use of the brief time I had to spare, I walked down by the principal one in an observant and admiring mood; but I cannot tell of all the thoughts and feelings that crowded upon me as I read the destination of the various ships, the average tonnage of which was about 1,100 tons, as they were bound over the mighty waters, some of them to the very remotest parts,

and even in minor cases to considerable distances, or to important countries.

And to one who had never before seen any but inland life—to whom even the sight of a solitary foreigner had hitherto been a rarity—there was something exceedingly interesting in the appearance of men with countenances of all casts and hues, from the fresh coloured Dane or Russian to the olive Grecian, the tawny West Indian, or jetty African—a curious, undefinable charm, considerably heightened by their various songs and conversations, each in the peculiar language of his native country. From the delight I had experienced in reading of such things, there was a thrilling cord touched by them that called up something like half-remembered associations; and the loud "Ya-hoy," on deck, or the shrill carol of a boy at the head of some tall mast, to which he had ascended by the shrouds with all the ease and dexterity of a cat up an orchard-tree, seemed rather to appeal to some feeling which had long been lulled to rest, than to call, by its novelty, a new one into existence.

Liverpool is scarcely three miles from the open sea, of which there is a similar view down the river to that we should have on land of a wide plain, to which we might be looking through an opening valley of the same extent. I am talking, of course, to landsmen, and must use such similes as the land affords. I am imagining you to have a taste like my own, with a spirit that can gush, or rather that cannot help gushing out with a thrill of joy, when, after pursuing your course with a glow of anticipation for miles down a

wide, beautiful, and living valley, you find for the first time a sunny plain, touched all over by God's hand with the richest charms of earth, expanding before you to the uttermost extent of your vision. And by that simile you may partially understand me when I say that an emotion of the kind filled my whole soul, as the New Brighton packet, upon which I had glided down the Mersey, paused where the river loses its waters and its name in those of the Irish sea—with this important difference, however, that while in the very widest of landscapes there is a certain feeling of limitedness, such a sense of infinitude and majesty burst upon me when I first beheld the sea, as nothing beneath the sky had ever before suggested. Fancy, for instance, an interminable plain of low, green, wavy bushes, hung on the sunny side with white dewy blossoms, created one moment, and vanishing or giving place to others the next, over which, "in airy wheels," scudded innumerable birds with white glancing wings; and then you have perhaps as good an idea as I can give you of what the scene would have appeared if clear of vessels; but, with here and there a ship, proud and of great magnitude, riding in full sail with the tide into port; others speeding to and fro with "a wing of steam," as if making sport of time and space; and others again, small craft, with one light sail—pilot boats, fishing smacks, revenue cruisers, pleasure boats, and the like—all mirthfully dancing and reeling about on those green flashing waves, in an unbroken flow of sunshine and a new-born breeze: it was at once to me so beautiful and so grand, as to require the suppression

of an impulse to plunge and mingle with it for very admiration!

A whole volume might be penned from the suggestions of a few hours on the beach at New Brighton,—a little watering place on the Cheshire coast, at the point formed by the estuary of the Mersey. The Fort and the Black Rock Lighthouse, from the top of which I had a dim perception of the Isle of Man, lying like a shadow on the far, far sea, I lingered long about, marking how sea-shells of various kinds lay around them in millions, while young crabs and yellow star-fish were playfully moving in the little clear pools of water left by the tide: but what then seemed to me most remarkable of all, was a small spring of fresh water in the sands, which an old woman was selling to those who were curious to drink it, in a spot that, at high water, would be nearly half a mile out at sea.

Never having seen the tide rise before, I watched its progress until it reached the flood, which chanced to be in the hour of twilight. It was, indeed, a most impressive hour. A thin vapour had gathered about the western horizon, up through which the sun, after it had set, sent its faint, luminous fan-like streaks far into the sky. This appearance did not last long—it subsided into a narrow golden hem of light, extending in a bow from south-west to north-east, like some intermediate element uniting the sea and sky. Presently, just where the sun had gone down, I became aware of a small dark speck in that streak of light, gradually growing darker and larger, until it formed a complete break in the bow, in several parts of which I soon

discerned other objects of the same kind: these were pilot boats just stealing into sight after their evening trip, but seeming in that dim light far more bulky than they really were, and giving me, very likely, a good idea of the advance of a distant fleet. While this was the appearance out at sea, there was a wild, and novel vagueness growing about the objects along the coasts, such as I have seen well expressed sometimes in marine pictures, but of which it is difficult in words to convey any distinct idea.

The coast of Lancashire, uncurving and stretching from the port far out to the north-east, was still perceptible, with its villas and windmills and villages, to a considerable distance towards Morecambe Bay; and several magnificent Steamers from the Clyde and Forth, taking advantage of the tide, were now just starting, and seemed to be chasing each other homewards in that direction, inviting one to send a few thoughts with them to the land of poetry and romance. The Cheshire coast presented an entirely different aspect. The Fort and Lighthouse, round which I had so recently loitered dry-shod, were now at least half a mile at sea, the waves dashing and foaming tremendously against them, and the lights of various hues, which were just beginning to revolve, sending their gleams afar on the waters; while the habitations of a few fishermen, and three or four bathing machines, were all that could now be distinctly traced along the dusky shore, which rose in an abrupt bank from the beach.

And there it was, on the sandy beach, that I still lingered, indulging in the profoundest and purest feel-

ings of my nature, aware for the first time of the full meaning of Byron's distinguished apostrophe to the ocean. O for the power of David or Isaiah, to describe the sublimity of my emotions then! A voice, like the roar of a million cataracts tempered by the rumbling of distant thunders, overwhelmed me from the "solemn and majestic sea." Wave beyond wave shook its mane with a flash of phosphoric light, as it advanced from the dim gloom towards me, then bowed its crest of foam and fell weltering at my feet; while, anon and ever, came one with a loftier front, a wider sweep, and a mightier rush than the rest, and drove me from its domain with a growl and a crash that I can yet hear echoing in the remotest regions of my mind. And when at last the potent element had asserted its sway to the mark—the very inch prescribed by that Almighty Power of whom it is said to be the mirror, and I stood on the lonely shore to bid farewell to the scene, a vision of all lands fell upon me—a sympathy with all times. The great "highway of nations" was before me; that element which shall be the medium of civilization and comfort, till all men shall have learnt the beauty of brotherly love, and through which intercourse between the most distant countries shall, by the aid of science, be rendered as easy as at present between province and province of the same kingdom. Then will governments know better the interests of their people than to subvert them by restrictions which are at variance with the ordinances of nature. The great end of all strife and discontent, the dispersion of man over the face of the earth, that he may culti-

vate it till it is again, as at first, one great Eden for himself and a garden of the Lord that created it, shall be consummated—so that patriots shall not have lived, nor freemen striven, nor martyrs died in vain. And though the time has been when men did not know that "an act of kindness on our own part is the benevolence of heaven directing us to achieve some good for ourselves;" though the hand of one has been lifted against another, and each has mistaken conquest for happiness; and though even now Guile worms its way and Tyranny stalks openly through society; there is a spirit at work that shall overcome them both; Truth has proclaimed that Evil shall work its own defeat; while Sincerity, and Charity, and Meekness, shall inherit the earth! Thou, enlightened Commerce, Prime Minister of Civilisation, shalt aid them;

> "And men to men the wide world o'er,
> Shall brothers be and a' that!"

Thus ended the Wanderer's Tale of his Trip to the Sea-side. The little party to whom he told it, at Ash Farm, is again widely scattered; and the reader and myself are left once more together, to ramble where we list.

Chapter Fourteenth.

MARKLAND GRIPS.

I WILL now tell you of a place you may hitherto have heard but little about. It is within a very short distance of Sheffield; yet I have some doubt whether it has hitherto been visited by twenty denizens of that town. It chances to be one of those lovely bits of country lying far enough off any great road to have escaped the notice of the guide-book compilers;* yet gain enough for those who have the heart to explore the untrodden nooks of Creation in search of its quietest charms. It is a wild little district, the more dear to me because it happens to be one of the prettiest links between two picturesque kinds of scenery, each exceedingly different from the other in its charac-

* This sketch was first published in 1841, when no other writer, that I am aware of, had mentioned the Grips. Since then, some portions of the sketch have been copied into a local guide-book, without acknowledgement, which I would not, however, have noticed, except to prevent any suspicion on the part of the uninformed, that I had been doing to the compiler what he had in reality done to me.—S. T. H.

ter, yet each fully fraught with fairy delights. It is the unobliterated footstep of Nature, when, after superintending the erection of her sublime throne in the Peak, she passed into Nottinghamshire and planted Sherwood Forest. It forms, in fact, a plot of neutral ground between the two counties, upon which the Genius of each might meet on friendly terms with the other, without actually encroaching on his neighbour's dominion—a sort of poetical Runnymede, where mutual claims are recognised, since its scenery is harmoniously composed of the cragginess of one district and the woodiness of the other—a delightful blending of the wildness, the ruggedness, and the loveliness of both. The place thus indicated is Markland Grips, lying in a luxuriant country, about equi-distant from Whitwell and Elmton in one direction, and from Clown and Creswell in another; and not more than three miles at the end of its western dell from the Eckington Railway Station; or at the end of its southern one from Bolsover Castle; while, where the two Grips conjoin, near Creswell Crags, it is not more than the same distance from Welbeck Abbey, the fine old seat of the Duke of Portland, which is within the ancient limits of Sherwood Forest:—I dare say you scarcely knew before how near Sherwood came to Sheffield; or you would have understood more readily how it was that Robin Hood, who was a native of Loxley, became so familiar with its various ramifications, and pitched upon it for the theatre of his exploits.

My first becoming acquainted with Markland Grips was when I had come out of Birkland, at its western

corner, late one summer evening, and had quietly pursued my solitary way through the moon-light glades of the woods, to Cuckney. At that pleasant village I staid all night, and the next morning started early for Creswell Crags. On leaving Cuckney, a fine country opens before you, dashed over with rich dark spots of woodland; and after expanding in some places to a considerable distance, it draws again to a point at a watery-streeted village called Creswell—a simple name that explains its own origin. Here to the right hand, two or three groups of small cottages seem as if they had shrunk out of the way under some grey overhanging rocks for shelter; and as you draw near to acquaint yourself still better with the scene, you perceive a little public house, with a fine old bowery sycamore at its front, up which ascends a flight of steps to an ale bench, surrounded by seats among its branches, where it is capable of safely accommodating an extensive convivial party. Passing this curious tree, and several rudely constructed cottages, you are at once in the opening of a most romantic defile—a streamy glen, with high rocky sides, that from the indentures on one hand, and the projections on the other formed to fit them, convince you at once that in some remote age of the world both were joined together, and that a high hill was here opened through its centre by some tremendous convulsion of nature. Yet however this scene may impress us, it has little of the terrific left about it—at all events, to me. For with the exception of the openings to some extensive and remarkable caverns, that are understood to have furnished retreats for

Robin Hood and his band, time appears to have obliterated a good deal of that grimness which generally characterises rocky scenery;—and the luxuriance of the hanging foliage and ivy; the greenness of the meadow extending from side to side; the freshness of the little river Wollen, flowing through the midst with its trail of willows; the grotesqueness of the clustering cottages at its upper end, and its opening through a green dell into Welbeck Park below;—all tend to cheer rather than awe the spectator, and to make him feel how harmoniously beauty and sublimity may dwell together.

But to proceed. I left this hamlet of Creswell by a steep narrow lane, and dropped into the rural old English village of Whitwell, by a pleasant field path. I shall not soon forget the impression this quiet congregation of old homesteads made upon me. Most of its farm-houses have several gables, and are built of grey stone, and roofed with slabs of the same hue, or covered with mossy thatch, with broad labelled stone window-frames, and low rustic benches beneath them. Spreading fruit-trees climb up their fronts, and being crowned by old-fashioned clumps of chimneys, and flanked with ample stack-yards or backed by fruitful gardens and orchards, above the bright foliage of which the silent smoke so gracefully arose, they carried me back by their appearance into the heart of a bygone time, and made me feel how much the English yeoman of an olden day had to love in his home. To complete the picture, there was the rustic little church, the ancient manor-hall, and the garlanded May-pole,

with several other objects of passing interest—but all in good keeping—nothing obtruding to break the prevailing charm of rural repose, save those kindly sounds of the fold-yard and the play-green, which add to rather than abstract from the general quietness and sweetness of such a scene; while from a hill which I ascended, just at the back of the village, was spread out one of the fairest and most extensive of midland landscapes.

Having a word of introduction to a friendly and intelligent gentleman here, with whom I spent several agreeable hours; he it was to whom I was indebted for my first visit to Markland Grips, to which he volunteered himself my guide.

It was a pleasant, sunshiny afternoon—and a walk by several winding field-paths and a green crooked lane, brought us to some little mossy rocks, ornamented with clustering shrubs and running plants, in a wild hollow, where rattled an ancient mill; but these turned out to be the mere index to scenes extending far up three diverging bushy glens, that were ultimately to touch every faculty of my soul, as it were with music, by their harmonious combinations of scenery. Up one of them ran rocks—grotesque and grey—from, and often partially *in* which the stems of dark yews and other trees fantastically wriggled and twisted themselves about, and then hung out their bowery heads from the crags and crevices, with mingled wildness and solemnity.

Sometimes we came to an antique cavity, and climbing in, found ourselves in a fairy dwelling, the inside

of which was lined with velvet mosses of brilliant hues, braided by tendrils of ivy and other green climbers, and overhung in front by festoons of evergreen, that playfully fluttered in the fitful wind. Next would be seen some castellated projection, whose ivy-mantled turrets made us think of old ruined abbeys and fortresses, so much in their solitude and stillness did they resemble those objects; and still further on, some little grotto retiring into its verdurous nook, would coyly invite us to enter, and enjoy the sweet prospect from its green-fringed opening. Surely never was elsewhere seen places so fit for the abodes of hermits!

Such was the bewitching succession of scenes through which we rambled, in the softening sunshine of evening, till coming to a narrow part of the dell, where the embowered rocks almost met over a limpid brook, with which we had all along kept up a happy companionship, we reclined for a while in the cool shade, to watch the flight of ringdoves from tree to tree, and to listen to their tender cooing, or the pleasant calls of other feathered inhabitants of the woods, musing in unspeakable thankfulness and joy on the beauties of nature, and the power which had been given us to reap from them so much instruction and delight.

Anon we plunged among the bushes on the opposite side of the dell, and scrambling up the cliff, found ourselves on a piece of table-land, from which we could gaze upon much that we had passed with considerable advantage, as the same objects had a different appearance from every new position.

Then unexpectedly we dropped into a sweet pastoral

hollow, with high woody sides, and a little brook warbling wildly through its centre. There was something in the life and spirit of this lonely dell, richer and purer in its effect than I had then felt elsewhere. There was a brightness in the whole scene that scarcely seemed of earth—a freshness even about its mellowness and repose, like that which inspires us when we read John Keat's poetry—so soothing, yet elevating—so tender, though solemn!—elysian fore-glimpses vouchsafed to man, that he may feel how well Paradise is worth his winning! Through this we went into another glen, which proved to be the southernmost Grip—much of the same character as the western one in the main, but somewhat different in its minor features—and if anything on a more extended scale, though not, if we except the little tributary just mentioned, fraught altogether with such a variety of beauty and interest. No one can gaze on the sides of this Grip, without perceiving indubitable proofs of their having been, like Creswell Crags—of which they are in some sense a continuation—undivided, in some distant age of the earth: yet how far, far distant, must that 'age be! What centuries it must have taken to form the rich deep soil on which this beautiful verdant pasture is spread between them! What evidences of a succession of vegetation in the interstices of the cliffs too! What vast masses of foliage hanging from the rock-sides in wild exuberance! Yews, great spreading funereal yews, waving out like something set to mourn the dread convulsion by which the chasm was riven, with such masses of ivied tapestry hanging

below them! A fresh fringe of mountain-ash, holly, and hazel, running along and waving over its uppermost borders; and a pure blue arch of sky thrown over from one side to the other! And, then such a strange yet beautiful scattering of mossy stumps, and little detached blocks of limestone and splintered crags, flung in a systematic sort of wildness along the bottoms—with here and there a huger block rolled nearer to the middle of the valley, from which grow tall spontaneous trees, as if they had stricken their roots into the very stone itself; while all around them various vegetable creepers luxuriate in the greatest profusion; amongst which winds that little stream making perpetual melody with its gentle song!

Such is some of the scenery of Markland Grips—perhaps too faintly sketched; yet sufficiently indicated to convince any one who would enjoy a holiday in solitude, that he might pass it to less advantage than in rambling there. The mile of country between the junction of the Grips at the Water-mill and Creswell Crags, is marked by many beautiful rural features; and the gathering of their streams forms the Wollen, which flows between the Crags; so that whoever once reaches the banks of that stream, may make it a guide to any part of the scene.

Chapter Twentieth.

A WREATH OF RHYMES.

TO be born with a living heart and intellect among scenes like those through which we have passed, was necessarily to be poetical, if not a poet, from the beginning. Still, for many years, I did not understand the spell that was upon me. Thus, as my father was carrying me in his arms, one winter morning, when the sky was dim, and the fields and gardens were white, and the snow descending calmly and slowly, flake by flake, my young soul was touched with the pensiveness, tenderness, and solemnity of the season; but the charm given to my feelings was then an undefinable mystery.

So, also, when I stood, on a still, grey, sabbath morn, at our cottage door; as the church-bells were chiming, and people were slowly passing, some alone, and some in pairs or groups, to their weekly worship; and the robin came to be fed from my hand, then flew into the garden-hedge and twittered forth its note, which my sister told me was its morning hymn; while a love for

all things filled my heart; I did not know the muse that was inspiring me, and could indulge in nothing more than "a wordless thankfulness."

Still less could I express the thrill felt on a brighter occasion, when winter was beginning to make overtures to spring. It was, (as I have somewhere else already told the story,) one February morning, in a lane at Fulwood, about a mile from Sutton. The whole landscape was sparkling with gems of frozen dew — not hoar-frost, but that bright powdery scattering, which is next akin to it. A cluster of rustic cottages was sending up blue-curling smoke-wreaths just by, and a green holly-bush, the only green object to be seen, was sweetly glowing at a bend of the lane beyond them, making me feel as if, by stepping as far, I should be all that nearer to the coming spring. It is a wide landscape that spreads away from that spot, dotted with cottages, farms, churches, villages, corn-stacks, windmills, villas, and all the other indications of quiet rural life, up to where the North Peak of Derbyshire brings its blue hills in a semi-circle, and hems in the prospect. All this, in the sunshine, was very delicious; and quietly pondering over it, the love of rural beauty bewitched my heart, almost like the sweet and silent joy of the love of a young maiden.

And there was another time, a sunny Sunday evening, it must have been about Whitsuntide, when the laburnums, lilacs, hawthorns, and chesnuts, were all in full blossom, and I was going along the grove that skirts the lawn, between the Forest-lane and the great mill-dam. What a lovely scene! The water lay a

bright mirror, calm as the sky that it reflected, save now and then, when a swallow dipped, or a fish upleaped, to catch its prey, and caused light eddies to expand to the sedgy margin. The fields, with their lines of hedge-row now green and white, stretched up to the ridge of Cocksmoor, Greenhill Wood, and Hamilton Hill. The factory, at work during the week, showed signs of rest, that told of the people who then toiled in it being now at ease, clean-dressed and happy. The clergyman's little white residence in the distance, with other scattered cottages and farms; the Hall, a modern mansion, near; the tall trees of the Old Bath Wood, across the Lawn, between; with milk-maids, companies of children, and loitering couples of lovers, to animate the picture; all beautifully harmonized with the richness and tenderness of the hour, and filled me with an aching ecstasy. I would have given a world at the time for power to utter what I felt, but had none, unless it were by tears; and even still more intense and unspeakable were the first effects upon me of the streamy and bowery haunts of Brookhill, and afterwards of Skegby, Pleasley Dale, Annesley, and Newstead.

My half-brother had some small skill in sketching rural scenes with a pencil and colours; and I thought it was necessarily in the same way that I too must, however ineffectually, reflect these touches of nature upon my soul. One day, in a somewhat odd fashion, I was thus employed—being at the time a very rustic sort of lad—when Mr. Samuel Woolley, who then resided at the Hall, called at our cottage. "Well, Spen-

cer," said he, "what are you doing?" Trying to paint a landscape, I replied. "A landscape!" he exclaimed—taking a look at my labours—"why, what do you call this?" A house, said I. "A house!—and what is this?" A hill. "And this?" A wood. "And that?" The sky. At all which he laughed most heartily, and continued—"And where did you get your colours?" This yellow, said I, is mustard. "Mustard!—and how did you make your black?" That's ink! "And your green?" Why, that is ink and mustard mixed. "And your blue and red?" I gave Henry Wright a ha'penny for them, was my answer, at which he laughed again, but praised my endeavours and told me, if I would go to the Hall, they would furnish me with better materials and some copies to learn by, which, to my very great joy, was subsequently done.

My efforts at painting, however, were so immeasurably below my aspirations, and never could have come up to them, that I began to despair of ever being able in any degree, to let others share my infelt delights, when Bloomfield's "Farmer's Boy" happened to fall into my hands and unlock the way. Blessed, thrice blessed, be the memory of Robert Bloomfield! What do I not owe to meeting with his little books! They led to my reading, in turn, Robert Millhouse, Richard Howitt, John Clare, Burns, Cowper, and ultimately nearly all our greater, and many of our lesser poets;—and catching a spark from the same flame, my own spirit, though of far inferior fuel, took fire. Yes, it was Bloomfield's invocation that expressed what I wanted, when he prays—

"O come, blest Spirit! whatsoe'er thou art,
Thou kindling warmth that hover'st round my heart,
Sweet inmate, hail! thou source of sterling joy,
That poverty itself cannot destroy,
Be thou my Muse; and faithful still to me,
Retrace the paths of wild obscurity.
* * * * * *
And lead my soul to extasies of praise
For all the blessings of my infant days!
Bear me through regions where gay Fancy dwells;
But mould to Truth's fair form what Memory tells!"

Now, this was precisely what I was myself longing for; so I soon began to imitate him. But the music of the Spenserian stanza had a peculiar charm for me; and I tried it, though not the earliest, early. The following grew out of my going home, a few months after the death of my warm-hearted mother. It is the leading poem in the "Forester's Offering."

My Native Cottage.

How beauteously the sunlit foliage waves
Around this white-wall'd Cottage in the dale!
By its green hedge how light the young brook laves,
Joyfully laughing at its own sweet tale!
What fragrance from these elders balms the gale!
And mark, where that old bowery willow throws
Its tresses o'er the moss-grey garden rail,
How the lush woodbine dallies with the rose,
And many a neighbour-flower in pride and beauty blows!

My earliest Home! how fondly swells my heart,
As at thy lowly door I enter now!——
Ah! whence this flush, this tremor, and this start
Of chilly sweat-drops to my heated brow?
Mother! my loving Mother! where art thou?

I meet thee not as I was wont—nor hear
  Thy words of welcome sweet—nor feel the glow
Of thy glad kiss upon my cheek, which there
Thou heretofore wouldst plant, then water with thy tear!

Thy clock counts out the moments as of yore;
  Its old shrill call the hearth-fed cricket keeps;
Thy kettle sighs the plaint it sang before;
  And round the window-frame green ivy creeps,
  And through its diamond pane the red rose peeps,
As they were train'd in thy flower-loving day;
  While on the sill the sunshine idly sleeps
Among these household plants,—for even they,
Because thou tend'st them not, pine mournfully away.

Then, Mother, why not here? How brief the tale!
  When winter pass'd away in smiles last year—
When daisies first began to star the dale,
  And the lark sang that blossom-time was near;
  While the coy redbreast left its cottage cheer,
To frisk delighted in the greening lane;
  Thy glad hopes budded to the bursting here;
And in anticipation thou wert fain
Long years of joy to hail—a bright, unbroken train.

And still when summer's long luxuriant days
  Our annual village feast brought cheerily on,
At once on all thy children didst thou gaze,
  And in that gaze feel years of promise won,
  So happy seem'd each daughter and each son,
Till evening warn'd us peacefully away;
  But scarcely had the autumnal change begun
Ere hence we pass'd again in sad array,
A tearful, heart-wrung band, upon thy funeral day!

And now far distant is thy dreamless rest,
  Amongst a green companionship of graves,
With no memorial, save upon thy breast
  A single flower, that lifts its urn and craves
  Kind Nature's nightly tear for thee,—or waves,
Wooing the gentle breeze that o'er thee creeps
  In whispers low to linger there, when laves
Sunset with pensive light those kindred heaps,
Where Memory musing walks—Affection bending weeps!

Yet, oh, how hard to link thy name with death,
My Mother! Even now I dream thee near:—
The soft air through the lattice, like thy breath,
Falls mildly on my cheek; and, hark, I hear
A step upon the path, then deem thee there!
But soon that breath fails in a faltering sigh;
Thy name I call—but thou dost not appear;
The footfall—distant now I hear it die:
My dream is done—I wake—to *feel* thou art not nigh!

O then, since here thou comest not more to me,
My heart shall turn to those dear, sunny days,
When here I sat and lean'd upon thy knee,
O'erjoy'd to learn the legends and the lays
Of thy dear native mountains, and the ways—
Romantic as their homes—of mountain-men:
For thou with warmth of native pride wouldst praise
Those wondrous scenes in moorland, dale, and glen,
Which oft have fill'd my soul with love and fear since then.

The birds on Bonsall Leas sung in thy song;
The flowers of Wirksworth Moor bloom'd in thy tale;
In thy descriptions crags o'er Derwent hung
In awe, to hear it roar through Matlock Dale;
Plain, at thy word, I saw the clouds all pale
Roll silent o'er grey Barrowledge's side;
And, O! how well in mystery couldst thou veil
Those deeds of other times that dimly hide
Where ancient woods frown down from Dunsley's lofty side!

Nor, when were told the wonders of the Peak,
Would fail for me thy ever-gladdening store
Of history and song; for oft would break
Upon my soul, in light renew'd, the lore
Of MY OWN SHERWOOD, glorious evermore!
Old Sherwood! Freedom's bowery haunt sublime!
The outlaw'd Patriot's dear-loved home of yore—
The homeless Patriot's haunt in modern time—
Fair Virtue's sweet retreat from Tyranny and Crime!

And Fancy then would climb its fern-clad hills
To scan the glowing prospects thence outspread—
Its light-curved lakes, whose tributary rills,
Now hid—now sparkling—through the Forest sped,

The flocks that on their fertile borders fed;
The wood's wild tresses, waving in the breeze;
The venerable ruin's hoary head,
Dim-seen afar, among the dusky trees:
And heavenly were the joys I drew from scenes like these!

Oft, too, wouldst thou describe my country's ports,
Crowded with gallant ships from every clime;
Her smiling palaces and frowning forts—
Whate'er of her was beauteous or sublime,
The fruit of modern taste or ancient time—
From domes remote that through old woodlands rise,
To cities crown'd with spires, that proudly climb
And flash the sunlight back through summer skies—
Until my young soul swell'd with gladness and surprise.

And much I wish'd, as in my mind would grow
A sense of Britain's grandeur and her might,
That in her sons a warm desire might glow
To use their matchless power and skill aright,
And in the ways of Love and Truth delight:
For, oh, an early consciousness was mine
That power misguided operates but to blight
All that is glorious—beautiful—benign—
And glooms with woe a world which else in bliss might shine!

But cease this simple chant; for on me here,
Through Memory's vista, dawns life's opening scene!
Hope's morn-like streaks upon its sky appear,
With sweet Affection's sunny smiles between:—
Below is traced all I have ever been!
All I have seen, or known, or felt, or done,
Lies there mapp'd out to Fancy's eye, serene
And clear as though life had not yet outrun
The bright and precious scenes in which its course begun!

And not for love alone of song or story,
Or youth's delicious dream, or childhood's glee,
But of the simpler yet sublimer glory
Of Truth's pure teachings, here first known to me,
Grows glad my soul, dear native Cot! in thee:
And Thought and Feeling in deep reverence bend,
While here I bare my head and bow my knee,
To HIM from whom all Truth and Light extend—
Whose throne is in the heart, whose kingdom has no end!

The following, embodying the popular idea of the neighbourhood relative to Mary Queen of Scots, in connection with High Hardwick, was another early attempt at word-painting. The magnificent house of Hardwick, built by Elizabeth, the celebrated Countess of Shrewsbury, with the ruins of an older one by its side, form, (as seen from afar,) but one vast pile. Since these rhymes were written, a conviction has begun to grow, that the beheading of Mary by Queen Elizabeth's orders, was not, after all, an act of personal spite or jealousy. But, giving here the popular impression, and pretending to nothing more, I must leave the abstract question to be settled by others. When I wrote, I believed as I wrote. There is an able article on the subject in a recent number of the *Westminster Review*. Nor would it be of much use to enter here upon the debated question as to whether Mary Queen of Scots ever was a prisoner at Hardwick at all. If she were, it must have been in the old house, as the new one was not built when she was in the custody of the Earl of Shrewsbury. But whether she were actually confined there or not, the place has become so associated with her in the public mind, and the new house contains so many vestiges of her custody in the family, that few who have heard her sad story view it from a distance, as it peers over the varied and wide-stretching landscape, without in some way associating one with the other. Mary is known to have been with the Earl's family at nearly all his other seats, and Mrs. Jameson appears to think it probable that she must have made a brief stay at Hardwick. It certainly

would be strange, considering that she was confined at various periods at the four points of Worksop, Sheffield, Wingfield, and Chatsworth, if Hardwick, so central to them all, should never have been touched at. But be this as it may, assuredly nothing can ever disassociate the memory of Mary from Hardwick, in the minds of poets and tourists, or even of the surrounding peasantry.

Rhymes on Hardwick.

(From Cocksmoor.)

Lo! where upon the plain appears
Yon fabric dim of other years—
Hoar sentinel of all the scene
Old Sherwood and the Peak between!
How,—as I gaze upon that place,
The ancient pride of Hardwick's race,—
How free in fancy could I stray
Where grey-beard History leads the way,
Forgetful of my passing prime,
The being of a by-gone time,
When warder's blast or hunter's cry
Awoke wild echoes far and nigh;
Or warriors met in mimic fray
To celebrate some festal day;
While peasants plied their hardy sports
Right merrily in the outer courts;
And minstrel's lay or jester's joke
That mirth prolong'd till morning broke!

What precious hours away have flown
Since first I wander'd there alone,
Child of reflection and of joy—
A thoughtful yet a cheerful boy—
The while I felt my mind expand
With visions of my native land,
And long'd its dear-loved scenes to paint
Without alloy, without restraint!

And scarcely now less warm I feel
As on my heart again they steal;
For pleasures such my bosom sway
As gladden'd it in life's young day,
And to imagination bring
The presence of that boy-hood's spring!

Lo! where once more from Sherwood's downs,
I gaze upon its fields and towns;
Its dusky wilds of gorse and wood,
With now a lakelet, next a flood;
Its hoary halls, or villas fair,
With humbler dwellings clustering near;
Its oaks so stately, that adorn
At intervals each brake of thorn;
Or bending willows that embower
The brooks that through its vallies pour;
Its lowlands green and uplands grey,
Threaded by many a winding way—
Here merging into bowery lanes,
There branching off o'er flowery plains—
Now through the pastures faintly traced,
Then—lost upon the heathery waste;
While farm, and spire, and tufted height,
Complete the vast enchanting sight;
Yet in the landscape, far or near,
Thou, Hardwick! hast not one compeer!

Then why do I begin to mourn
As here to thee again I turn?
Why should a scene so fair impart
One sad sensation to the heart?
'Tis not because the day is past
That heard thy watchful warder's blast;
'Tis not because thy hunter's cry
No longer wakes the echoes nigh;
Nor that thy pageantries no more
Recur, as they were wont of yore;
Nor that the chilly wind complains,
Where swell'd the minstrel's thrilling strains
In thy old hospitable dome,
The jovial hunter-chieftain's home!
'Tis not for these I feel so sad
Amid a scene so fair, so glad.

Ah, no! it is the thought of one
Who having own'd an ancient throne,
Had yielded to a ruthless band
Her sceptre and her rightful land,
And come, an exile in despair,
To wail her hapless fortunes here!

'Twas hard to leave that silken seat
Where Gallia worship'd at her feet,
Upon old Scotia's rugged strand,
Amongst a still more rugged band
Of martial minds, to waste her years
In strife, and misery, and tears:—
But, oh! 'twas harder far to be
The dupe of England's treachery;
And from her regal home be borne
To dwell defenceless and forlorn
Amid strange scenes, and hearts as strange,
Darkening her doom in every change;
Till murder seal'd at length her fate
To gratify a rival's hate!

Poor Mary Stuart! 'tis not mine
To gild each wanton fault of thine;
I would not hold thee up to fame
As one unworthy of all blame,
But let the world consistent be,
Nor its own errors charge on thee;—
Of all—let not the abject things
Who hold that *wrong* is *right in kings*,
To thee impute thy courtiers' crimes
And trumpet them to future times!
A nobler age—a lowlier sphere—
No flatterer to pollute thine ear—
And then methinks, devoted Queen,
Better and happier thou hadst been!

In a very different strain is the next, written about the same period, and on which Richard Howitt complimented me by saying that I had gained a step in my poetical progress, by painting, not only a scene, but a man enjoying it.

A Vernal Sketch.

Spring comes!—to greet it now I hear the lark
  Trembling and trilling up the morning sky!
Another rises—and another—mark
  How many now the fluttering pinion ply,
  Each pouring down a rill of melody
Distinct—yet losing its distinctness—till,
  Beyond the limit of my o'erspent eye,
They all combine in one wild, heavenly trill—
As with its single song one bird all Heaven would fill!

And O! how sweet a chorus swells below!
  With the light winds what glad responses play!
How clear the blackbird's notes begin to flow,
  Where shades yon brake the warbling rivulet's way!
  How loud the lesser birds their tribute pay,
Of morning music, from the hedgerows round!
  While through receding woodlands rolls away
A soothing under-current of soft sound,
By brooding stockdoves pour'd from their retreat profound!

Lo! now the poet leaves his shaded cot,
  Yet pauses at its rustic garden-gate,
Upon the ancient, lone, and silent spot,
  In calm delight awhile to ruminate:
  Again he moves, then stands once more, to wait
Some undeveloped thought that haunts his mind,
  Till forth like light it breaks,—and now elate,
His solitary path behold him wind,
With hale and agile frame—with fancy unconfined!

How well his looks bespeak his spirit's joy,
  As leisurely he steps among the dews!
For now no cankering cares his heart annoy—
  No dark regret his memory now imbues—
  As thus to gaze, to listen, and to muse,
Where waves the daisy-field—a silvery sea!—
  Or other wild flowers blend their countless hues,—
A glad companion of the bird and bee,
He haunts the lone wood-side, or wanders o'er the lea.

O Nature! who thy lover's joys can tell?
Who, but the poet, know a poet's pleasures,
When thy pure harmonies his bosom swell,
And in sweet words those harmonies he measures?
Oh! what to him were all Golconda's treasures,
Or all the tinsel honours Art bestows,
Were he deprived of those brief, happy leisures,
In which, oblivious of his cares and woes,
His spirit forth in hymns to NATURE'S AUTHOR flows!

One day I was walking between Sutton and Mansfield, when a vision of all my boyish haunts seemed to come upon me like a very presence, filling my heart with exultation; and before reaching home I had strung together the stanzas below, which shortly afterwards appeared in the *Metropolitan Magazine*:—

Sherwood Forest.

O! THE fern-clad hills of Sherwood,
How beautiful are they,
When morning hangs on dappled wing,
Calling the dews away!
I love to bound along their tops,
When breezes, mild though free,
Play o'er the bloomy fields below
And bear their sweets to me!

O! the woody plains of Sherwood,
Outspreading far and wide,
Where peeps the low pretenceless cot,
The palace towers in pride!
How glorious 'tis to wander there
When the mid-day lark upsprings—
A tiny speck in the boundless sky,
That with its music rings!

O! the deep, lone dells of Sherwood,
So quiet yet sublime,
Where with the wood-bird's mellow voice
Is heard the streamlet's chime!
How sweet their winding paths to thread,
When twilight's tender hour
Subdues and melts the musing heart,
Yet gives the spirit power!

Dear native scenes of Sherwood—all!
Hill, woodland, plain, and dell!
I view you with a lover's eye—
A lover's heart, as well!
For from my boyhood's joyful hours,
Hath it been mine to roam
Amongst you far away, yet still
Feel everywhere at home!

Love and friendship, too, asserted their claims and their sway; and, though their history, if told, might be a sad one,

"Better love and be deceived,
And weep that love and that deceiving,
Than doubt one heart that, if believed,
Had blest one's life with that believing!"

So with this Wreath I will even blend the following, written on their several occasions; since, *to be true to my own feelings*, I should have to write them *all* again, if in the same circumstances:—

To a Beloved One.

O! TENDER is the primrose pale in spring,
Gem'd with its dew-drop at the twilight hour;
Or jasmine that on some fair bough doth cling,
Seeking protection for its pendant flower:—
Sweet the wild woodbine blooming in its bower,
The snowy May-thorn mantling in the dale,
The rose besprinkled in a gentle shower,

Or lily wafted by the evening gale:—
And beautiful the tinted clouds that sail
On seas of sunshine in the morning sky,
Reflected where, along some deep green vale
Outstretching far, unruffled waters lie:—
Yet these, though paragons, are not than THEE
More tender, sweet, or beautiful, to me!

To the Same.

(WRITTEN SOME YEARS AFTER, WHILE SHE WAS ON A VISIT TO HER NATIVE SCENES.)

HAIL to thee, darling of my heart—
Thou of myself most cherish'd part!
Warm from my eyes the tear-drops start,
While thoughts of thee come o'er me:
For thou in those dear haunts art roving
Where first I saw thee, graceful, moving—
Where first I felt the joy of loving
In tenderness steal o'er me!

There, loveliest! flit from scene to scene,
And happiest thoughts and feelings glean,
Where thou wert wont on me to lean
While life's soft charm fell o'er us,—
Where breast in concert beat with breast,
As fondly each the other prest,
When evening warn'd the world to rest
And threw its mantle o'er us.

But, dearest thou of womankind!
Sometimes a moment lend thy mind
Unto the one thou'st left behind,
The one who does adore thee,—
Whose soul, at thy beloved name,
Will ever glow with that pure flame
Which kindled through his youthful frame
The while he first hung o'er thee!

Not Words but Flowers.

(TO THE SAME.)

Thou tellest me thou canst not write
  Thy feelings with the pen,
Though poetry gives thee delight
  Thou fain wouldst give again.
Bring then to me a poem, love,
  Not writ in words but flowers,
Gather'd from lane and field and grove
  In May's delicious hours!
For I full oft have known thee show
  Poetic taste and skill,
In making wreaths of wild-flowers glow
  Harmonious to thy will.

Yes! hither bring, a poem bring,
  That to the heart will bear
Whate'er of blossom-bursting Spring
  The memory holds most dear!
Let its first verse be golden broom,
  Its next a white-thorn spray,
Its third a wild-rose in full bloom
  From some old bowery way:—

For these will mind me much of THEE,
  While from the future turning
To long-gone hours of ecstasy,
  Ere thou wert wan with mourning:—
Ev'n Hope itself will backward steal,
  Charm'd by such emblems gay,
And brightlier smile as they reveal
  Thy own life's lovely May!

Bring, bring me daisies from the hill,
  And cowslips from the valley;
Primroses from the woodside rill,
  Where ringdoves love to dally;
And bluebells from beneath the boughs
  That o'er the warm bank spread,
Where violets breathe their sweetest vows
  And bine and bramble wed!

Bring from yon blackbird's choral shade,
Where gladdest sounds are born,
A branch of blossomy crab, array'd
In hues that mock the morn;
And fetch the full-orb'd kingcup bright
And meadow-lady, while
I stand and watch thee with delight
From this old village stile.

And hie thee where broad chesnuts flower—
Where oft, in life's young day,
We felt the rapturous evening hour
Melt our fond thoughts away:
Then pull me down the wax-like cone
That blooms o'er that dear spot;
And thence bring, too, for joys far-flown,
The sweet *forget-me-not*.

My love of loves! my heart of hearts!
My muse! my life of life!
The word a thrill still new imparts
Whene'er I call thee—WIFE!
O! tender is the charm of flowers,
By thy light fingers strung
In sunny fields or shadowy bowers
When the glad year is young;—

And 'tis most sweet with thee to tread
Wherever they abound,
And catch the ecstasy they shed
On everything around:
For wide o'er mountain, plain, and dell,
Their countless little blooms
Are stars, that sparkle to dispel
Life's sad and weary glooms.

Then thanks to thee, loved Poetess!
This wreath thou hast entwined
Appeals in words of blessedness
And joy unto the mind:
For flowers, dear flowers! I love to greet
Their hues, from spray or sod:
They are the language, mute though meet,
When Nature worships God!

Intense now was my yearning for a literary friendship with one of my own years. Elder literary friends I had and profoundly revered, but wanted a younger to complete the charm. The following was written on first hearing of a kindred spirit of my own age:—

A Resolve.

THEY tell me o'er yon Forest wide
There lives a man, like me,
Who loves to watch the river glide,
While wandering on its grassy side,
And mirror'd in its gentle tide
All natural forms to see;—

Such as the pearly clouds that lie
Far scattered o'er an evening sky;
Or shadowy hawthorn bower;
The willow bent, or poplar tall;
The old bridge-rail that fain would fall,
The shrub, the rush, the flower.

They tell me that he loves the Spring
For music and for bloom;
The Summer for its rich, warm glow;
The Autumn for its plenteous show;
And—such his sympathetic flow—
The Winter for its gloom.

And, O! 'tis said the magic light
Of Song hath burst upon his sight,
And lit his way to Fame;—
That Wordsworth can his spirit charm,
And Burns a current wild and warm
Send thrilling through his frame;—

That when he through Creation strays
On what is good and fair to gaze,
He plies the tuneful art,—
Embodies in his living lays
The awe, the rapture, and the praise
Creation never fails to raise
Within the poet's heart.

They tell me, too, his wit is rare;
That warmth of soul has he;
That he another's joy can share,
Or cheer a drooping son of care—
Can comfort for the woe-worn spare,
Yet richer, happier be.

Now,—if 'tis true that such a man
Lives by the Forest, and I can,
I'll find him out ere long;
And o'er the hills, or by the stream,
Or through the woods we'll rambling dream,
Until with joy our hearts o'erteem,
Then pour it forth in song!

This drew us each to the other. I sought his home, and he mine. We often rambled, read, rhymed, and sung together; and while the opportunity lasted, it was one of perfect enchantment. Here is proof:—

To a Brother Poet.

(IN SPRING.)

WHILE now I take my pleasant way
Where blooms the flower and buds the spray,
I muse upon thy homely cot
And many a sweet adjacent spot,
Until I feel, companion dear,
My heart, all joyous, with thee there.

Yes! in my memory flows the stream
That brightens in the morning beam,
And gives again to heaven the ray
Imparted by the closing day,
Till I its voice in fancy hear,
And feel my heart still with thee there!

With thee it loves the cottage hearth,
Where native character shines forth—
Where, by the faggot's cheerful blaze,
Old Comfort smiles while young Mirth plays,
And Toil forgets his hard-spent day,
To read or muse the hour away.

And up the valley, by the well,
Wild-sounding in its ancient cell,
Where bow the trees their tresses near,
As if its endless hymn to hear—
Oft will it leap to be with thee,
For there 'tis thy delight to be.

'Tis with thee watching from the steep
The sombre woodland's solemn sweep;
And by the blue-curved forest lake,
And o'er the moor, and in the brake;
And where the hoary oak appears,
Whispering its tales of other years!

My heart is with thee when the morn
Is in the orient newly born;
'Tis with thee when the full-grown day
Enjoys its wide and glorious sway;
And still will linger, when to rest
Evening sinks softly in the west.

And in the stilly hour of night,
When Fancy wings her mystic flight,
Thy dreamy guest she bids it be,
Or with thee wandering far and free,
'Mid scenes from Fairyland we borrow
That vanish ere we greet the morrow

Long, then, my dear poetic brother,
May we instruct and cheer each other!
For, O! where'er 'tis thine to stray,
The glad companion of thy way,
There's no sweet ramble, time or spot,
In which my heart is with thee not.

The ideal of another of my friendships—older, but which, from its oak-like steadfastness, time was only developing very slowly, and the true strength and value of which I can conceive it possible even the time to come may hardly unfold—I endeavoured to embody

some years since in a different strain, when the poet to whom it relates was wandering, as he may now be wandering again, in Australia:—

Friendship's Pilgrimage.

Glow! deep thanks glow! that I am here at last—
That yonder tower-crown'd village, calmly peering
Over the landscape beautiful and vast—
So sabbath-like and still—my eye is nearing!
O! to my heart how peaceful, yet how cheering!
How oft have hope and memory hither stray'd!
But more than all beside the scene endearing,
Is this lone house, that from the waving shade
Advanced to greet me seems in Spring's glad bloom array'd.

Hail! long-left home of one who from thy hearth,
And life and scenes around, true learning drew!
Whose genius in thee gently budded forth—
In thee, too, nourish'd by the kindly dew
Of Nature's love, into full ripeness grew,
And round it shed that sweet refreshing power
With which one mind will kindred minds imbue,
As flower its fragrance breathes to kindred flower,
Or sun and moon-light blend in evening's heavenly hour!

Dear to me art thou for his sake! for though
He seldom went the jarring crowd among,
Because he quiet loved and hated show,
Deep joy he oft would give to those among
His friends whose hearts could vibrate, touch'd with Song:
Master of all its magic power was he,
To wake the electric thrill with feelings strong,
Or pour a gentler tide of ecstasy,
Fresh as a Junetide rill slow murmuring o'er a lea.

Yet was he virtuous:—Never would a word
One thought impure in his kind soul betray:
His tale or jest no evil passion stirred;
And modest, though enchanting, was his lay:
Oft have I known him, innocently gay,

Set our small gathering in a jovial roar;
Then with the fancy and the heart so play,
That eyes, which sparkled wild with mirth before,
Would when he will'd it melt, and tears of pity pour.

And I have known him, too, in converse sweet,
Where twilight brooks sang hymns to Solitude,
With tenderest thoughts the ear of friendship greet.
Till friendship, by such intercourse renewed,
Became more friendly, ripening to a mood
Of love, almost like that which angels know—
Who, with etherial purity endued,
Through Heaven's unfading glades of glory go,
Communing each with each till in one soul they glow!

For often have we stray'd away together
Through realms of thought, remote and rarely trod,
In Nature's wonders teaching one another;
Or silent, linger'd—to be taught of God;
Who, breathing life alike through cloud and clod,
And star and flower—through all creation's plan—
Bids truth and beauty spring in every sod
And fall in every drop, and gives to man
A passion and a power His glorious works to scan!

But Time along the fields of life hath pass'd,
And reap'd the flowers and sown the tares of years,
Since o'er this scene he fondly linger'd last,
Then took a long farewell in silent tears:
For in his native haunts no more appears
The gentle poet now:—'tis his to roam
Far, far away; yet distance but endears
His memory more; and therefore do I come
Affection's pilgrim now, and hail again his home.

Thanks, then, for all I feel as here I stand!
Thanks for this impulse sweet, that swells my breast
And makes my warmest sympathies expand
Till on all pure and kindly things they rest!
Thanks for all charms in Nature's page express'd—
For all that's wonderful or fair in Art!
Nor less than these, for Friendship's glowing zest
I thank thee, Heaven! with an o'erflowing heart,
And faith that kindred souls no time nor space can part!

The next I have the more confidence in offering now, because of being assured that amongst those to whom it has already given pleasure is Leigh Hunt:—

Mary's Dream.

The days are shortening fast, Mary,
The nights are growing cold,
And sadder moans the fitful blast
Along the twilight wold:
Let's close the shutters tight, Mary,
And stir the brightening fire,
And thou shalt tell with warm delight
Old tales that never tire.

Yes! thou shalt conjure up again
The hopes that once beguiled
Our hearts, when first upon thy knee
Our little angel smiled;
For though that knee, so supple then,
Be stiff and weary grown,
Ere long with him, in heaven, again
Will youth and health be known.

Well, I believe it all, dear John,
So come, sit down by me:
How sweet the faith that what has been
Of good will always be!
And doubly sweet to know, dear John,
Our child no more can die—
That I'm "an angel's mother" here,
Though he's beyond the sky!

I'll something tell to thee, dear John,
But not a tale of old:
I only learnt it yesternight—
'Twas by that angel told!
He hover'd near me while I slept
A calm insensate sleep—
Though my soul a happier vigil kept
Than sense could ever keep.

And when he spake, 'twas not, dear John,
In words like thine and mine:
His thoughts flush'd forth in every look,
So radiant and divine,
That all the charm of music's art,
Though not a tone, was there;
And, O! it overfilled my heart
With bliss beyond compare!

He said that though the sky above
Seems heaven and us between,
To angels there and those they love
It does not intervene:
That all they fix their hearts upon
No space from them can sever,
But what becomes with them as one
Is with them one for ever;—

That all we realise by love
And faith of heaven, on earth,
The means of intercourse will prove
With beings of nobler birth,
Till we, to higher natures wed,
Are won from this dull sphere,
No more the tear of grief to shed,
Or faltering move with fear!

And while communion thus he held—
My angel child with me—
A glorious vision I beheld
No words can paint to thee;
For in a glow of holy light
Far purer than the sun,
The future lived before my sight,
As all the past had done!

But what to me most wondrous seem'd,
In that new world so bright,
Was finding this world there redeem'd
From shadow into light:
The false, like clouds, away had pass'd
From the unchanging blue:
Yet, through eternity to last,
The true remain'd the true.

And by that token blest is known
Thy truth, dear John, to me,
For there I bow'd before the throne
With our sweet babe and thee;
And, O! a meet reward is thine
For all thy love and care;
For *here* though aged and weak I pine,
We both were youthful *there!*

The following has already appeared, as a contribution, in *Household Words*:—

Trees and Men.

I saw two trees. The one was fair and high,
And threw its leafy branches round it wide;
So perfect was its shape that ev'n the sky
Seem'd proud to have that space thus occupied;
Yet was it hollow; all its heart was gone;
But year by year it swell'd and flourish'd on.

The other was by grandeur so unmark'd,
That it was scarce distinguish'd where it stood
With many more,—sometime before impark'd
From the last vestige of an ancient wood,—
But though small glory clothed it as it grew,
Its heart was to the core still sound and true.

And as it pleased the lord of that domain,
At length, to try the truth of those two oaks,
The proud one with a few sharp clefts was slain;
The humble one sustain'd a thousand strokes;
And when at last, at eventide, it fell,
A nobler fall was not in all the dell.

The proud one yielding little but its dress
Was left upon the spot to rot away:
The humble one lived still, in use to bless,
In ornament to charm, from day to day,—
Transferr'd into the mansion's fairest room,
Where Genius flings round Art immortal bloom.

Also I knew two men, like those two trees.
The one was in profession great and high
And scorn'd the other, who could not so please
With much display the superficial eye,
Which does not see how meek true worth may stand,
Whilst great pretence would cumber all the land.

For he (the humbler) powerful was, but mild;
Teacher of teachers, strong, profound, but clear;
Unostentatious as a little child,
Yet in sagacity an ancient seer;
And though his days were not in public spent,
He paid again through man what God had lent.

And while an epitaph upon a wall,
Which many criticise but few believe,
Now of the prodigal tells more than all—
Excepting what he did to make us grieve—
His neighbour's uses dwell in Wisdom's heart
And unto all around their good impart.

Rhymed Gossip.

Addressed to one who had written a farewell word in a book of mine, and left it, (at an old country mansion where I was staying,) with an inquiry if it would make me "angry."

Saturday Evening.

ANGRY!—why angry?—no, no,—not with thee:
'Twas but the liberty of friend with friend—
A liberty thou'rt welcome to with me:
For as again into the world I wend,
'Twill sometimes mind me of the quiet hours
Pass'd in this scene of forestry and flowers.

The time at which I come into the room
And find thy playful farewell in my book,
Is that soft hour when twilight's pensive bloom
The sky suffuses, as I upward look:
Then to the table turning back again,
I seize—where thou didst leave it—this old pen.

I seize it—but for what 'twere hard to tell:
  No doubt it is with some intent to scribble;
But hark! there rings below the dinner bell;
  And yonder pleasant fountain's "ribble-bibble,"
And rook's deliberate call, and blackbird's lay,
And this poor rhyme, must all for it give way.

* * * * * *

Well! dinner's o'er—and here again am I!
  All else being still, the fountain grows more loud;
But not a gleam of light is in the sky:
  'Tis just the season for old thoughts to crowd
Back on the brain—old feelings to the heart—
While new ones, too, into existence start.

* * * * * *

Sunday Morning.

Thus far I'd writ, when call'd again—to tea;
  And so my week and rhyme together ended;
Nor do I think it worth the while to be
  Afar into the present week extended:
For time knocks at my heart his solemn warning
To bid such profitless employ good morning.

And is it not a very heavenly morning?
  The sky without a cloud, the lake unstirr'd;
The flowers with their best hues the earth adorning;
  A sabbath life imbuing man—beast—bird—
And everything—as in the breast is felt
Such peace as doth the soul subject and melt.

That peace, my much respected friend, be thine!
  Nor be it unto one short day confined;
For, lo! there is a Fount of Peace Divine,
  O'erflowing ever for the yearning mind:
And by that Fountain, O may'st thou have rest—
For ever hoping, trusting, blessing, blest!

The next I shall always associate with a recollection of my friend, William Davidson, from Annandale; because, about the time it was written, he trod the same scene, in a similar hour, and was deeply imbued with the very same feeling:—

Vesper Musings.

Day pass'd sublimely o'er the hills away,
And, as his footsteps faded from the sky,
Inclined in thoughtful solitude to stray,
I laid life's common cares and labours by
And took the pathway down the pastures nigh,
Until, against a hawthorn-shaded stile
Pausing, I gazed with an enchanted eye
Upon the moon-lit fields around me, while
Serenely they reposed in Nature's kindliest smile.

Her gentlest dews for joy the young Night wept;
The silvery willows hung their tresses low;
Over the ripening corn the cool breeze crept;
And the brook muttered in its wanderings slow:
The stars shone out, but with a soften'd glow;
The distant cottage-light beamed through the glade
With a mild radiance; and the upland's brow
Afar, eve's fading coronal arrayed,—
A scene more calm, more sweet, I ne'er before survey'd.

Anon, a holy stillness fill'd my mind,—
A glad yet solemn influence thrill'd my frame;
And while my love wax'd warm for all mankind,
Some loftier object still it seemed to claim;
Till, touch'd by poesy's essential flame,
My melting soul in *silent hymnings* flow'd
To the Immortal Source whence first it came;
And long that spot in happiest mood I trod—
Assur'd that Man on earth, ev'n yet, may walk with God!

The Rectory.

(A SCENE IN LINCOLNSHIRE.)

How pleasant here in those calm days
When Autumn in the landscape lingers;
When skies are melted by her gaze,
And leaves turned golden by her fingers;

When morning dews are loth to go,
And noontide sounds are few and tender;
And the far western uplands grow
More bold in evening's glowing splendour!

Lo! where old trees yon lordly seat
Half screen from these fraternal neighbours—
The Church and Rectory, quaint and neat,
Where the good Pastor lives and labours:
Sure, love and peace and hope dwell here,
Though haply not unmix'd with sorrow;
For hearts that dwell in that glad sphere
From woes beyond it oft will borrow.

Come but with me in winter time,
When all the scene has lost its glory,
Save where the woodlands rise sublime
And silent in their mantles hoary;
When earth is shrouded by the snow;
When heaven by one vast cloud is hidden;
When thy own spirit's fire burns low,
And thou to hope hast been forbidden!

Come *then!* and thou shalt solace share,
Within that pastoral home so pleasant,
That soon will banish wintry care
And to thy soul make summer present!
For here—though priests too oft are found
Whose lives their zest from luxury borrow—
Is one whose parish has no bound,
Except the bound of human sorrow!

To the Dying Year.

Thou art dying, Old Year, and yet, even now,
There's a holiday smile on thy faded brow;
And oft, 'tween the clouds that are passing thee by,
Comes a mild sunny gleam from thy pensive eye.

Then, with thee I'll commune, as with some kind sage,
For I loved thee in youth, and revere thee in age,
Since a pleasant companion to me thou hast been,
As I've journeyed along through each season and scene.

Together in Spring-time we walk'd in the woods,
And watch'd with a welcome the green bursting buds,
When the carolling bird and the whispering stream
Made the ramble as sweet as an angel's dream.

Through the long Summer-day we roam'd on the plain,
'Mong the new-mown hay and the ripening grain;
And deep in the shades of the valley we trod,
In the stillness of evening, communing with God.

And when many-hued Autumn the landscape had clad,
And all things in nature seem'd soberly glad,
Sympathetic we still sought the glade and the glen—
For thy teachings were kindly and holy then.

Now 'tis Winter,—and hark! thy successor is near;
The thoughtless are hailing him on with a cheer;
But loving at first, I revere thee at last,
And my sigh shall chord with thy funeral blast.

Bourn Well-head.

These lines were composed on a Sabbath-morning, at Bourn Well-head, a large transparent pool, in Lincolnshire, with limestone bottom, through thousands of pores in which the waters come *raining up* perpetually, making bright little globules and dimples on the surface :—

Lesson of grateful love, ascending
To Love that giveth without ending!
Beautiful waters, upward raining,
Ever drawn, but never draining!
From his Forest old and wide,
Sherwood's wanderer seeks your side,
That to scenes of moor and mountain,
Rock and river, wood and wild,
He may add so sweet a fountain,—
As becomes a reverent child,
Learning everywhere and ever
Of the love of life's Great Giver!

An hour ago, o'er England wide,
Ten thousand sabbath chimes were rung:
The chimes have died into a tide
Of whisper'd prayers and anthems sung,—
Swelling and falling on the mind,
As on the ear this sabbath wind.
And still in England's sabbath sky
Ten thousand larks are singing high,
While woods and vales below reply!
Yet not alone by vocal powers;
But in the mingling breath of flowers,
The hidden life that silent thrills
In vegetation's loneliest bowers;
The unchanging majesty of hills,
The beauty wild of their white rills;
The pathos of old wasting towers;
The sparkling dews of pastoral plains,
The budding banks of winding lanes,
The happy pulse of voiceless things
That creep, or dive, or run, or fly,—
In all that flows, or floats, or springs,
On earth, in water, and in sky,—
And musing bard with raptured eye,—
All, all to each, and each to all,
Are eloquent with love, and call
For boundless gratitude and praise
On this bright day, "the pearl of days,"
To Him who is of all the Giver,
As thou, sweet fountain, of thy river!

The following does not relate to scenery; but, for relief, I will throw it in, as a household flower.

Be kind.

Be kind to the old man, while strong in thy youth—
Be kind, not in seeming alone, but in truth;
He once was as young and as hopeful as thou,
With a bosom as light, as unwrinkled a brow!

Be kind to the poor man, and give of thy bread,
With shelter and pillow to comfort his head;
His lot and thine own may be one ere he dieth,
Or neighbour to thine the low grave where he lieth!

Be kind to the crooked, the lame, and the blind;
What's lack'd in the body they feel in the mind;
And, while virtue through trial and pain cometh forth,
In the mind, not the body is man's truest worth.

Be kind to the fallen who lives but to mourn;
Be kind to the outcast who seeks to return;
Be kind to the harden'd who never hath pray'd;
Be kind to the timid who still is afraid!

The injured, who down by oppression is borne;
The slighted who withers; the victim of scorn;
The flatter'd who topples aloft but to fall;
The wronger and wrong'd—O, be kindly to all!

For vast is the world of the generous mind,
And narrow the sphere to the selfish assign'd;
And clear is the path of the warm and the true,—
Of the haughty and vain, how delusive the view!

Then unto the old show respect while thou mayest—
The poor, while to Him who gives all things thou prayest—
The weak or the lost, 'neath the load of his sorrow,
And thy own cup of joy shall o'erflow ere the morrow!

The next piece contains the history of its own composition. It has been alluded to in a previous chapter; and I include it in this Wreath because, having given my friend's place a rhyme, it is only fair that the rhyme should have, in return, a place.

Ash Farm.

(A LAY CHRISTENING.)

Two spires ascend on Ashfield's plain;
And just half-way between,
At one field's distance from the lane,
A lone farm house is seen.

I love it well, for though so new
That it hath yet no fame,
There dwells a friend—in boyhood true—
In manhood still the same.

Full seven and twenty years had pass'd
Since we at school were mated,
And here to meet again at last
It was that we were fated;
And I could tell of varied life
And scenes by land and sea;
Whilst he, with home's dear memories rife,
In turn could gladden me.

'Twas thus away the evening wore—
Themes giving birth to themes,
As wavelets circle to the shore
Of broad and pleasant streams;
Till, as from early scenes and times
To present times we came,
My friend desired that in my ryhmes
His FARM might find a name.

And so it shall! at once I said;
And since on every hand
Such fair ash-trees their branches spread,
Wide waving round thy land;
Emblems of happiness be they,
And heaven defend from harm
And prosper well from day to day
The tenant of ASH FARM!

"Ash Farm!" said he, "the name sounds well:
Long let it be retain'd;
And long may friendship love to tell
The way in which 'twas gain'd!"
Then be it known to all for whom
Apt names have any charm,
That Abraham Bradley's new-built home
Henceforth is call'd ASH FARM!

The following occurred to me on hearing the way in which some poor people spoke of a wealthy family in their neighbourhood—no matter where:—

The Cot.

I AM not of the tribe whose aim
Would bring the nations down,
Till all things to the level came
Of demagogue and clown.
Upon whate'er is grand or fair
I would not cast a blot;
And yet the life to me most dear
Glows warmest in the cot.

True, those who breathe in marble halls
An atmosphere of art
Will often answer duty's calls
With noble mind and heart,
That fit them for that lofty ground
And consecrate their lot;
Yet might not souls as bright be found
In many a nameless cot?

Oh! never let me chime with those
Who rail for railing's sake,
And all humanity's worst foes—
Its own wild passions wake:
Their motives vile I cannot brook
And heed their ravings not;
Yet still I wish the HALL would look
More kindly on the COT.

Not that 'tis well to see a cold
Stiff patronage display'd—
All ostentatious of its gold,
Yet giving to degrade:
The poor need all their self-respect
To fortify their lot;—
'Twere almost better to neglect
Than thus abase the cot!

No, Lady! go, as thou canst go—
Thy thoughts thyself above,
Thy heart "a little heaven below,"
And teach them how—to love!
And thou shalt find in after hours
Thy lesson unforgot,
Reflected, like the light from flowers,
In beauty from the cot!

As fair as ought 'neath lordliest dome
Was much that I have seen
Developed in a lowly home,
Where Love with Truth had been—
Finding its way, like warmth with light,
Into the hidden spot,
And gladdening with its presence bright
That lone and humble cot.

Yet well, full well, I know that where
The taint of sin remains,
It fills the place with saddest care,
And all it touches, stains;
And, oh! when this with want allied
Thy pity heedeth not,
What wonder if thy hall of pride
Be hated in the cot?

Then, Lady then, snatch thou the hour
To do what good remains,
Ere on thy gentle spirit lour
Old age, regrets, and pains;
And God will lessen thy own sum
Of woe, till woe's forgot,
And bless thee in the world to come
For blessing here—THE COT!

From the time of first leaving my rustic home to my thirty-third year, I had gone through a series of the strangest vicissitudes; and now I was residing in all the glare of Pall Mall, nearly opposite the Palace-gates of St. James's, my drawing-room crowded almost every day by the scientific, the titled, and the fashionable, who came to see my experiments in vital magnetism. It was a feverish life into which circumstances had thrown me, without my seeking it; but demonstrating and illustrating what appeared to me to be one of the most

sublime and incontrovertible truths in nature, I forwent all my wonted rural pastimes, as a duty, and devoted myself with but little relaxation or rest. On the day of one of the royal levees, when a mile of aristocratic carriages and gay liveries stretched along the streets from the Palace-gates, and it seemed almost as if all the fashion of Europe were throbbing and fluttering in the hot sunshine, beneath my windows, (which had been occupied for two hours or more by several elegant loungers who had given me a call,) tried and weary, I could not help throwing myself back in my chair and writing the following, which sprang out of my very heart. I do not give it now as any reflection upon those whose tastes may differ from my own, but simply as one of the yearnings of my own soul in the circumstances described. It is said that when Robin Hood was taken to court, he ran away from London once more into the forest, lest he should be "slain by sorrow;" and I felt somewhat like him, perhaps, in 1845, on writing, in Pall Mall,

A Sigh for Home.

Down in a lane, a lowly cot,
With sanded floor and rustic fire,
A sister gladdening the spot,
A brother, and an aged sire—
These, these upon my memory come
With kindling thrill,—the scenes of home!

The modest spire that peepeth o'er
An ancient farm; the whirling mill;
The garden by; the field before;
All help the picture sweet to fill,
And make for me, where'er I roam,
The presence of my native home.

A pasture-brook, too, with its trail
Of varied foliage, wanders slow.
And whispering forth its gentle tale
With meaning none but poets know,
Maketh strife's countless voices dumb,
And more endears that native home.

Home! where affection true rewards
Our sire for good through him deriven;
Home! which our mother still regards
Though with our brother gone to heaven;
Home! where the brightest hopes had birth
Of all I have of fame or worth!

From thee I've wander'd wide and far,
And much have done and felt and seen;
But steady as a polar star
To my affections thou hast been,
'Midst friendships false and love undone,
Deceit and cant, and hopes outrun.

And even now, where fashion glares,
And its gay votaries round me throng,
And popular opinion bears
My name triumphantly along,
Of thee I crave the quiet joy
To me thou gavest, when a boy!

How little know they who suppose
That fervid spirits seek to roam,
Careless of others' joys or woes,
Sheerly from lacking love of home!
Each heart its own emotion knoweth—
And that which deepest is least showeth.

But cease, my soul, these murmurings cease!
Another work befits thee now:
Dare it, and do it, and when peace
Hath cool'd once more this throbbing brow,
A time, a holy time, may come,
When thou shalt rest again—AT HOME!

It must have been a short time afterwards that I wrote these verses:—

To My First Grey Hairs.

BLOSSOMS OF DEATH! why here so soon,
Startling and sad as snow in June?
My summers are but thirty-three;
Why come ye then so soon to me?

Blossoms of death! whence do ye grow?
Why do ye come but never go?
Winter's white flower gives place in Spring—
You to the last in your place cling!

Blossoms of death! then why so soon—
Why come to me before life's noon?
Few years—how few!—have pass'd me by:
Why come to one so young as I?

Blossoms of death! although to me
Solemn your early mission be,
I'll take it friendly, since your bloom
Bespeaks a life beyond the tomb!

All things have use:—as snow-drops bring
Some tidings of a coming Spring,
Blossoms of death! ye say—"Prepare
To leave this dull, cold scene of care!"

And as, when Spring breaks on our gaze,
The snow-drop withers and decays,
Blossoms of death! so your decay
Shall come, but with a brighter day!

Thus whether, blossoms pale! with me
Your season short or long may be,
Still let me trust, as ye grow rife,
The fruit will be immortal life!

Sometimes I did escape for a day or two from my London engagements into the country—once or twice to Mary Russell Mitford's scenes of "Our Village," in Berks and Wilts—and about as often into Essex and

Suffolk. Previous to those occasions I had an idea that Essex was a remarkably flat county; and was charmed to find that it had hills as well as plains. The following grew out of one such visit:—

Rural Glimpses.

With friendly Edward Butler for my guide,
To spire-crown'd Danbury let me break away,
That we may gaze o'er Essex stretching wide!
For this is full-ripe Autumn's loveliest day,
And from life's fount ecstatic feelings play,
That with still more and more delight will glow,
While from the line where gleams yon eastern bay
To that where solemn inland forests grow,
Within my soul your plains, bright Cann * and Chelmer!* glow.

With what enchantment burst such scenes on those
Who long, too long, like me, in cities pent,
Love yet to live near Nature and unclose
Their hearts to her and keep their minds unbent
To fashion's idols! Well were I content,
Sweet little Sandon! on thy cotted green
That my best hours of rest should all be spent,
Or where on Upper Baddow's knolls are seen
Homes ancient and grotesque, with deep, warm dells between.

Or where, o'er Chelmsford in mid-landscape gleaming,
Thy commons, Writtle! and thy woods, extend;
With here a brooklet musically streaming,
O'er which the listening willows graceful bend;
And there some farm, whose clustering chimneys send
Their blue wreaths curling into skies more blue,
With many a soft and silvery cloud to blend,
That lingers long, as though it came to woo
Each happy rural glimpse the glad morn brings to view.

For everywhere what beauties forth are peeping!
While wood to wood in solemn grandeur waves,
Corn-stacks and orchards peaceful guard are keeping,
Round homes where Plenty winter's wants will brave

* Rivers of Essex.

And something spare for those who, homeless, crave!
Masters! let wide your sympathies expand:
The honest poor should neither starve nor slave,
But share those comforts from a liberal hand
Which Heaven so freely sheds upon your lovely land!

My home is Sherwood Forest, famed in story
For many a scene both beautiful and vast,
On which have been enacted deeds, the glory
Of history and song in ages past;
And I have oft, like Goldsmith, wish'd at last,
When all my wanderings in the world are o'er,
To die where life's affections cling so fast;—
For home has loves all other loves before,
And charms that, once deep-felt, are hallow'd evermore!

But yet, methinks, so full of rural splendour,
Fair Cann and Chelmer! are the slopes and plains
Through which ye hasten to your bridal tender—
So rich in fruits and flowers your fields and lanes,
Touch'd as they are with Autumn's golden stains,
That I could almost wish 'mid them to dwell
Till life's last pulse shall falter in these veins;
For more I gaze the more my heart will swell
And harder make the task to turn and say—FAREWELL!

At length I visited home once more. Many of its features remained much the same; but how many had changed! And still they go on changing. Even the stream from which my birth-place obtained its pretty name of Brookside-Cottage is being enclosed from view, and scarcely a tree is left of all the foliage that once overshadowed our play-place. The annexed simple stanzas, sent to John Whitehead, Esq., the British consul at Archangel, tell part of the story:—

Changes at Home.

ALLWOOD'S Croft-stile is gone, my Friend,
Where once you frolick'd with such glee;
Turn'd is the path to Smedley's-end,
And fell'd my Father's cottage tree!
Starch Yard is "Starch Yard" call'd no more;
In Windmill-lane there's now no mill;
The old Tithe-barn was closed before
The Sunday-school on Oates's-hill.

A change has come o'er all the town;
The Cotton-works in ruins stand;
The Hall, they say, is coming down,
Although to last for ages plann'd!
Cowpasture-hills are levell'd low,
And Maple-wells are all closed in;
The Forest-side few flowers can show—
Its streets grow thick, its woods grow thin!

'Tis true the Church still rises nigh;
But even that is not the same
(Since our old neighbours round it lie)
As when in childhood's day we came;
And now a fine new School they rear—
That's one good sight I'm glad to see—
Yet all such change, however fair,
Makes home less homely seem to me!

But something still, dear Friend, imparts
A charm to our old native spot:
Our love of many living hearts,
And many gone but not forgot,—
A tender and an infelt power,
Strengthening as outward things decay,
Linking the past and passing hour
With a less changeful coming day!

But why linger on the past, when our destiny is forward? Whence would come our rivers if the brooks refused to leave their springs? Better, far better, the philosophy of—

The Stream of Life.

My life a mountain stream has been;
What power to fix its course had I?
Now urged, now check'd—now hid, now seen—
What is its mission from on high?
O God of love! let trust in Thee
Go with it wheresoe'er it glide;
O God of wisdom! ever be,
As Thou hast ever been, its guide!

The infant rill, when illness cross'd
And stopp'd its voice of joy with pain,
Till its faint path seem'd dried and lost,
Thy goodness soon brought forth again;
And on with laughter and with shout
It held, in morning light delight descending,
Winding and jetting in and out,
And glad as it would know no ending!

And I remember looks of pleasure,
And tones of thankfulness and praise,
And warm affection without measure,
That cheer'd it on in those young days:
Soft sunshine of thy face, my Mother!
Great truths, my Sire! by thee display'd;
Thy rural lore, my elder Brother!
My elder Sister's warmer aid!

And younger brethren, kindred streams,
Joining my course with glee and fret,
With her, the youngest, whose mild beams
Of soul awake my throbbings yet!
All these were there, the tiny tide
Enlarging with their varied mind,
While on, from scene to scene, it hied—
Though cheerful, grave; though bashful, kind.

Then into deeper, duskier bowers,
With yet increasing force it went,
And found in schooltime's tangled hours
Full many a check, but little vent.
Oh, school! to me thou wert not dear,
Thou prison drear from day to day!
Though learning to my heart was near,
And still kept with it on its way.

Next through thy opening landscape, youth!
Came struggling forth the stream of life,
Like error, wandering; yet like truth,
Strong in its purpose 'mid all strife;
And flowers bloom'd on its rugged shore,
And gleaming skies of hope hung o'er it,
And down all obstacles it tore
And bore them on in pride before it.

At length, o'er manhood's varied plain,
That wider grows, yet less appears,
The waters calmly seek the main—
Their destiny in future years.
When bounding down the early steep
When first emerging from the wild,
The stream of life its course may keep;
But what of manhood knows the child?

Yet speeding on, through friends and foes,
Through rocks and meads, as God is willing,
More useful getting as it goes,
Until, its destiny fulfilling,
The stream bears on the little boat,
And next the heavier keel succeedeth,
And then a thousand barks can float
Where yonder mighty sea it feedeth!

Yes! such is life: it comes to birth,
Runs forth rejoicing and receiving,
And, as it wanders through the earth,
Feels onward drawn, as one believing;
Then finds at last that not alone
Unto itself was its ordaining,
But that it most enjoys its own
In trusting, giving, and sustaining.

And mine a stream perturb'd has been;
What power to fix its course had I?
Now urged, now check'd—now hid, now seen—
What is its mission from on high?
O God of love! let trust in Thee
Go with it wheresoe'er it glide,
And may Thy wisdom ever be
Through good and ill its constant guide!

Thus, as yon cloud-descended rill
Its home again finds in the sea,
Shall Life, obedient to Thy Will,
With all its uses, come to Thee,—

Great Source and End of all our being,
Above all space, beyond all time!
All-pure, All-mighty, All-foreseeing!
All-bounteous, Glorious, and Sublime!

Thus, (without wishing to turn back,) let us in some things be children for ever, whatever strength or scope may be added in our progress. As the stream when entering the ocean retains many of its first elements; so let the heaven-like faith, love and candour of childhood, go with us through all. Simplicity and bravery —ductility and power—are perfectly compatible At all events, I felt so assured, when penning this simple tribute:—

To a Little Child.

I WOULD not be so weak and vain
As mourn that I am not a child:
Yet, oh! that I could be again
As loved and loving, meek and mild,
With look as bright and voice as wild,
With faith as strong and will as free,
And heart by earth as unbeguiled,
Thou little bird-like babe, as thee!

Thine eye from heaven its blue hath caught,
And warmth and light are in its beams,—
And in thy voice to me is brought
The music of my rural dreams,
The charm of scenes where April streams
Gurgle and lisp and laugh along,—
Gladdening the sight with loveliest gleams,
And thrilling every nerve with song.

No other muse need I invoke
To bring me back the by-gone days,
When Nature all around me spoke
In words of gratitude and praise,
Until in corresponding lays

My soul expression tried to find,
And my heart paused in rapt amaze
To hear those echoes of the mind!

For childhood's spirit is the key,
All other instruments above,
Whereby, while here sojourning, we
Unlock a universe of love!
Nay, more! by it alone we prove
Our call to endless glory sure,
By it all sin and shame remove,
By it all good and truth secure!

And now—leaving out many I would gladly, but for fear of tedium, have included—let me tie up this homely Wreath with the following MOUNTAIN PRAYER, written in my temporary retreat at Ashover:—

How beautiful are all Thy works, O GOD!
The starry heaven and the flowery lea,
The golden cloudlet and the emerald sod,
Touch'd with Thy love, all testify of Thee!

These rocks around us, pouring down sweet rills;
Yon moors outstretching in the distance grey,
The pastures spread between these wood-crowned hills,
And homes that dot the landscape every way;—

With the pure rivulet that along the vale
Wanders from mill to mill—from fall to fall—
Now shouting loud, now whispering low, its tale
Of use and loveliness, to gladden all;—

CREATOR blest! let not from year to year
Such scenes glow on unnoticed by the throng
Of those who live to toil or loiter here,
But wake our spirits with an impulse strong!

Wake us to feel what joy may be deriven
From such a paradise by Thee prepared!
Wake us to know that all that Thou hast given
Grows not the less for being by all men shared!

CREATOR blest—whose love the wide earth fills,
Who hast made all things well!—O, evermore,
Pour out THE LIGHT OF MIND among these hills,
And teach us, while ENJOYING, to ADORE!

Chapter Twenty-First.

THE RIVERS OF HALLAMSHIRE.

HALLAMSHIRE is that space of the county of York embraced in the liberty of Sheffield, and verging on some of the most picturesque parts of Derbyshire. In all Britain are not to be found spots more primitive or romantic than some in that neighbourhood. The traveller on business might easily pass through Sheffield, and carry away few of its associations beyond those of cutlery and soot. Not so the poetical loiterer, who may take leisure to trace to its source any of the five streams that converge there and feed its thousand wheels. In such a ramble he will often step with the feelings of an original explorer into rocky nooks and bushy dens, or find himself suddenly obstructed by trout-pools and natural waterfalls of indescribable beauty.

Ebenezer Elliott, in his "Village Patriarch," "Ranter," "Ribbledin," and many other glowing and graphic emanations of his picturesque mind, bequeathed a new and deathless interest to the entire locality, and may

almost be said to have impersonated the genius of the district; for his soul was a reflex of all its features, from the most wild and stern to the most gentle and tender. Thus there is not one of its streams that does not palpably fling itself from the dark mountains and rugged rocks into the green dells and meadows, and so revel and shout, or sink into a low pathetic moaning in his verse, as he adapts it to the illustration of his argument and pours it with a resistless charm into the soul of his reader.

The Don, or Dun, rising on the border of Lancashire, in the same moss as the Mersey, though flowing in an opposite direction, and gathering a fresh rivulet from every dell in its course, comes rolling down by Deepcar, reflecting the crags and woods of Wharncliffe and Shirecliffe, and receiving the Yewden, Locksley, and Rivelin, ere it enters the town. Of those, the Yewden and Locksley come from a dim region about Bradfield, a little antiquated village with a road into it and none out, as the rustic humourists say; but with military mounds and other memorials, that tell of the rudest ages, still lingering near its grey old church. The Rivelin, or Riveling, so named, perhaps, from its coming through a rift in the ling or heather, is the wildest of them all. It rises somewhere a little on the Yorkshire side of Moss-car and North Stanedge, and as it takes its irregular way through the grey, cragged, and splintered, yet cotted and flowery landscape, feeds many a gleaming pond, and turns many a grotesque grinding-wheel—now humming, now murmuring, and anon roaring aloud, as it lingers in one place or rushes

through another, on its useful course; whilst the Wyming Brook, the Ribbledin, and many other waters, fling themselves into it from the mosses, rocks, and moors, increasing, as they join it, its force and beauty to the last. The Ribbledin is one of the loneliest and loveliest natural cascades in England, and had no fit name till Elliott gave it this, in one of his sweetest poems, "The Christening," commencing—

"No name hast thou, lone streamlet;
That marriest Rivelin;
Here, if a bard may christen thee,
I call thee Ribbledin—
Here, where first murmuring from thine urn,
Thy voice deep joy expresses,
And down the rocks like music flows
The wildness of thy tresses!"

The Sheaf, from which Sheffield takes its name, rises in the moors about Totley, and rushing down into Abbey Dale, beautifies the Eden that lies in the neighbourhood of Beauchief, Ecclesall Bierlow, and Chantrey's Norton, and receives the Porter as it enters the town. The Porter, too, rises on the edge of the moors, near Ringing Low; and though several may be more wild and headlong in their career, this is the most beautiful, I think, of all these streams, as it murmurs from wheel to wheel through the woods and meadows. Elliott calls it Nature's thwarted child; but one might almost call it her petted one, from the loveliness she has bestowed upon it. Once I lived in a little hamlet, just far enough from the Porter to let its voice grow familiar to me in the still hours of the night, the sabbath, or a summer holiday, when its waters were let loose from the well filled wheel ponds. And some-

times with my dog and staff—or with a dearer companion, to whom it was in those days my chiefest delight to point out the most interesting lines and points of such scenes—it was my wont to wander by its side, indulging in

> "the still communion that transcends
> The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,"

until, for me, there seemed not another such paradise on earth.

On one of these occasions I had sallied forth with none but my dog Traveller, (a fine black retriever,) determined to keep up a close companionship with the stream to its remotest source, before returning. On arriving within about a mile of Ringing Low, (a hill on the estate of the Duke of Norfolk,) I happened to lose the dog, where a small wood hid the course of the stream from view; and growing somewhat perplexed when he did not answer my call, I went into the wood to see what had become of him. Here the cause of his not hearing me was soon discovered. There was a deep ravine, into which dashed the river in one of the finest perpendicular cascades I had seen in the neighbourhood, but of which none of my companions,—not even Elliott, or Bramley, or the Fishers,—had ever heard; and there, far down, on a large stone that made a sort of island in the foam, stood my beautiful dog, gazing up at the deafening torrent with as much apparent wonder and delight as if he had been a landscape-painter or a poet! On my showing this spot to Mr. John Ward, he took me to another cascade he had himself found out in a similar manner, and at no great

distance, up another branch of the same river. How pleasant it was, afterwards, to make pilgrimages with tasteful friends to spots that Nature had thus unfolded! And equally pleasant was it to stand alone, at times, near our little grey hamlet, and to let all that filled and beautified and animated such a valley quicken the heart's vibrations! Nay, it was impossible even to sit in one's cottage without feeling something of them. Thus I was one day musing on the hearth. The door was wide open behind me; and before me, surmounting the mantel-piece, was a little mirror, in which the valley was reflected, like a picture in a frame, only so much more perfect than any mere picture. What made it more exquisite at this juncture was, that a complete rainbow was spanning the scene, from Brinkcliffe Edge to Endcliffe Wood; while St. George's tower, at Sheffield, formed the remotest object, and was the very centre of the background! I never expect to see a picture like that again. One rainbow I have seen, from Malvern Hills, spanning the city of Worcester, and another from Cratloe Mountain, spanning the city of Limerick. Both those scenes were exceedingly beautiful; and such it is possible I may see again. But to sit on my own hearth, facing my own fire, and to see a rainbow arching the green valley of the Porter, with the town and towers of Sheffield filling up the distance, is a luxury that I can expect to enjoy only in memory. Upland Hamlet! many a time does my spirit visit thee still! nor can any cause of regret take from [illegible] the joy thou once gavest; wherefore what [illegible] of thee is true to me yet:—

The Upland Hamlet.

Little old Hamlet! thou'rt a favour'd place,
A nest within a nook beloved of Nature,
A dimple on the landscape's smiling face,
Where dwells beside full many a pleasant feature
So genially, that members of one creature
In sunshine joying do all objects seem—
The hills so lofty and sublime in stature,
The fields that thrill with life, the brooks that gleam
And sing to wake the woods from their long winter-dream.

And do the woods not wake at that sweet call,
Which countless other hidden voices swell?
Hark! while the thorn-bud bursteth from its thrall,
How the glad news the thrush begins to tell
To his old friend, the blackbird of the dell,
Recalling last year's warblings to his ear,
When, in the blossom'd bush that bower'd the well,
They chanted bridal hymns in music clear,
For all blest things that wed when Spring's bright days appear!

How happy, loitering on this quiet hill,
To feel one's heart the centre of all love
And joy and beauty, which the landscape fill
From the deep vale to the calm sky above!——
List! is that sound the murmur of a dove,
Or the low gurgle of some rivulet lone
That through wild hazel-dells delights to rove?
Or yonder busy town's unceasing tone,
By distance mellow'd till 'tis softest music grown?——

Little old Hamlet! dearly do I love thee:
Thy cluster of grey homes and gardens green;
And woodland waving solemnly above thee,
With hooded well and muttering rill between;
And children gambolling round housewife clean;
Or patriarch, sunning at his open door,
And reading news from many a distant scene
To gathering gossips, who admire his lore,
Thinking each fresh event more strange than all before

I love thee in all seasons and all hours—
From this, when Spring walks blithely forth at morn,
Strewing the lane-side banks with tenderest flowers
Or greening yonder fields with fresh young corn;
To that when Autumn's evenings heaven adorn
And roll o'er harvests ripe their golden light;
Or hoary Winter weaves for bending thorn
A frosty mantle, beautiful and bright
As that it wore when May pass'd from our raptured sight!

How dear this cottage, too, that singly by
Stands with its chimney-clump in ivy drest—
Its smoke-wreaths curling far into the sky,
Solemn and slow, before they join the rest!
Awhile now hovering o'er a scene so blest
Those fading films, all silent in their motion,
Wake gentlest aspirations in the breast,
And then dissolve in the etherial ocean,
As in Eternal Love absorb'd is man's devotion!

Little old Hamlet! ever mayest thou be
Retired and happy as thou seemest now,—
From avarice, idleness, and luxury free,—
Thy children's peaceful arms the spade and plough!
And may they ne'er to wrong or meanness bow,
But, loving one another, strive alway
Heav'nward to turn an open, honest brow!
And O, while oft they muse, or praise, or pray,
May God reign in their hearts and bless them night and day!

Chapter Twenty-Second.

UP, TO THE PEAK!

AND now we turn again towards the Peak. What a strange and strong attraction I have felt from my childhood up towards these hills! Is it because they were the home of my maternal ancestors, that in my feelings for them there should exist this affinity? How often in boyhood, from my native uplands, would I watch the dip of the evening sun among them, and read on their glowing tops the indications of beauty and sublimity below, as if pre-conscious of the hoary rocks, the solemn woods and joyful streams, with every befitting association of romantic life and custom, I should afterwards find there!

It was when I was about twelve years old that my desire to reach them had its first gratification. The time was late autumn, but the weather was still beautiful; and it was just in the twilight that I passed the castellated ruins of Winfield Manor, without having before been aware of their existence. Indeed, except in pictures, they were the first ruins of any magnitude

I had seen at all, and the romantic melancholy with which they affected me has never entirely passed away, but has caused a love for all scenes of the kind wherever I have beheld them, and that has been throughout England, Scotland, and Ireland.

Twilight was fading into moonlight as I reached Crich and descended to Holloway, which, for that night, was my destination. Though many and many a time I have gone the same journey since, and extended it much beyond, never has the scenery through which it passed grown old. The cottage of my cousin, Philip Spencer, to whom I was then on a visit, was at Over Holloway (or, as the natives pronounce it, Howay,) on the top of a very steep hill, commanding a prospect of all the woods and lawns of Lea Hurst, the windings of the Derwent and the canal down to What-stand-well Bridge, the heights of Wirksworth Moor and Alderwasley, and many of the loveliest inhabited knolls and nooks that eye could desire to gaze on; and hour by hour would I linger with deep delight, wondering how those mountains came into existence, and why it was they had such power to charm me; until the stars began to twinkle about their summits, and the chill air of evening would warn me away.

At the same time my cousin Daniel, from Middleton-by-Wirksworth, was visiting my cousin Philip, too; and it was decided that on his return I should be his companion. And, what a treat! Quite a character—and a fine one in his way—was my cousin Daniel. By some casualty, in early life, one of his legs had become

shorter than the other, and he was very lame, going with a sort of hopperty-step. Still he could get on both rapidly and far, and talk as rapidly and eloquently while he went. He was a local preacher among the Methodists, and knew every member of his sect for a dozen miles round; and very interesting—sometimes very amusing—was it, to hear his conversations with any of them we chanced to meet. It was beautifully calm and moonlight, the evening we left Howay for Middleton; and so scriptural was his discourse when talking of the scenes around us, that Lea Wood might have been the Mount of Olives; and the Derwent, Jordan. And yet there was no spiritless cant in what he said; but more often a true raciness and appropriateness to the place. On our arriving at Cromford Bridge, he took me along the road, now rarely open, that runs between the river and the rocks, in front of Willersley Castle; and we were presently in Cromford village, and at the house of one of his religious friends, who set before us some excellent bread, butter, mealy potatoes and milk, to refresh us while we rested, and made many apologies for having nothing better to offer. Daniel thought these apologies needless, and at last abruptly stopt them by exclaiming—Hold thy tongue, Robert, hold thy tongue! With food like this to give a wayfarer, thou should'st rather say, "Such as I have, I give unto thee: if thou art a Christian, it's quite good enough; and if thou art not, it's too good!" After this repast, we started cheerfully again; and climbing rather than walking for another mile and a half, I was before midnight at the birth-place of my mother—

Eleanor Spencer—with all the touching memories and associations I have given you in her history.

My first stay in those regions was about a week; and I had seen quite enough to make me restless, and desirous of another visit. In short, I had determined, to go, if possible, and live constantly near them. With this view, I ran away, one fine morning in spring, and spent the night at Smithy Moor, near Ashover, with my dear old aunt Kitty, whose body now rests with her husband's, in Ashover church-yard. Her husband's father and mother, who had lived to an old age, both died in one day, and were buried together in one grave, at Ashover. Curiously enough, the same thing afterwards occurred to my aunt and her husband, (George Allen,) themselves! They lived together to extreme old age, at Smithy Moor, then died together, and were buried in one day, in one grave, in the same churchyard. But my running away and passing that night with them was many years before their death, and very kindly they treated me. My hopes of *then* dwelling on the verge of the Peak, were, however, fated to a very hasty close: for next morning, my old schoolmaster, William Hardstaff, who had been despatched in search of me, took me in custody and induced me to return with him. But our way back was a very circuitous and romantic one, and much delight it gave me.

On the ninth of May—Matlock fair-day—1825—was it that William Hardstaff, and his truant ex-pupil, staves in hand, and attended by a large dog, might be seen, toiling along the road that crosses Wooley Moor and Tansley, for Matlock,—their object being so to

lengthen the journey, as to make their arrival at Sutton happen in the dusk of evening, an arrangement that suited the pupil well. And so it was, that as they descended into Matlock village, with sweating brows and dusty shoes, there was a novelty in the whole scene which he would not have missed for worlds. Herds of kine and flocks of sheep; and dealers among them, with broad red faces, broad hats, and broader dialect—all vociferation, bustle, and eagerness; shows of wild-beasts, mountebanks, giants, dwarfs, and conjurors, loudly proclaimed by drums and gongs, bugles and clarionets, and slang orations; mock-auction carts, with their wide-mouthed auctioneers; and stalls of toys and gingerbread, enough to supply a whole county; were all commingled there. But the height, solemnity, and silence of the hills and rocks around, by their remarkable contrast, gave the whole fair a lilliputian character that was almost ludicrous. Instead of going down by Matlock Bath, we crossed the breast of Riber Hill, by Starkholmes, to Cromford. There, at that time, lived old Mr. Fryer, who got his living by itinerating with stationery. Many a time we had seen him come to the school, at Sutton, with something like pleasure—having found by experience that after each of his visits, we had copy-books with fresh woodcuts ornamenting their covers,—and very precious, to us, in those days, were such simple pictures. Mr. Fryer invited us to a hearty meal; which, (and a lengthened chat,) concluded, away we marched again along the lovely valley, with the Derwent sometimes rushing, sometimes loitering by our path, to Lea, Howay, Crich,

and then back again into the plain—my father not at home, and my mother too pleased with my return to blame me much for having run away.

Ten or twelve years afterwards I had to visit those scenes again, on a different mission, and put up, for one night, at the Jovial Dutchman, in Crich,—where Mr. Witham, the postmaster; Frederick Hall, the schoolmaster; rare John Frost, the magic old man-of-all-work; Thomas Lee, the great shopkeeper; an odd fellow, named Israel Daws, and one or two others, (none of them lacking some touch of character,) hearing that a stranger was staying for the night, came to spend the evening with me, and to afford me what they could both of information and amusement. Vicissitude and death have since made strange changes in that neighbourly little cluster; but from that night they had taken a liking to me, as I had to them; and Death himself will not destroy the recollection of our first meeting, till he has got the last of us.

Leaving them next day,—a bright and beautiful day,—and touched by the grandeur of the scenery by the way,—I leaned over a wall, on the hill between Crich Cliff and Howay, to contemplate the prospect, and presently became aware of the approach of a village postman or foot-carrier, with his load,—sidling along so slowly, that one would wonder how he could expect ever to reach his destination. He had a bundle on his head, a basket in one hand, a parcel in the other, a bag slung over his shoulder, and a letter-case strapped under his arm. His shoes were white with dust, his face the colour of a piece of broiled ham and would

one might think, have been quite scorched, but for the *basting* of perspiration that dripped over it from his brow. On reaching the place where I stood,—as he probably calculated on a gossip as well as a rest,—down went the basket and parcel from his hands; next followed the bundle off his head; sling went the bag, with a bang, from his shoulder,; and now he was leaning too, with folded arms, upon the wall, by my side. To my remark that it was a hot day, he answered only with a sound between a grunt and a humph; and the same when I said,—But the scenery is very beautiful. When I tried again to draw him out by a word about the *fine* hills, he seemed to think, like a girl to whom I had once made the same observation, that "they were that,—fine and hard to get up!" Certainly, there could scarcely be a more beautiful landscape anywhere. Up, behind us, arose a craggy and wooded hill,—how high, it was impossible to see. Down, below us, went a deep slope, to the shining river; away again, beyond which, arose rock above rock, wood above wood, and peak above peak, to the very heavens.

Can you tell me, said I, the name of yon beautiful green knoll, just opposite. "What, yonder?" he replied, pointing to the very spot. Yes, yonder, was my hopeful answer. "Why, that," said he, "is t' Cowms." Cowms — Cowms — I enquired, why do they call it Cowms? "Why," shouted he in reply, "becoss it is t' Cowns, I s'pose!" Exactly so, I said; but why should it have that name in preference to any other? "Why," he retorted, "becoss that name's t' right un!" Despairing of a solution by any other method, I now

thought of getting the etymology of the word through its orthography; but here I fell into a worse fix than ever. Can you tell me, I asked, in the civillest tone, how the name of Cowms is spelt? Upon which he turned his hot face full upon me, and, opening wide his eyes and mouth, with a loud "Ugh!" exclaimed—"The idee o' spellin Cowms! Why, I should think ony body knows what Cowms is, a-bout spellin it! It niver is spelt, mon; it doesna' neyd spellin!" This was a poser, and I gave up all hope. But now came his turn to question me. It was on my quietly remarking what a different sort of country this was from that I lived in. "Why," asked he with eagerness, "where dun yo come fru?" Nottinghamshire, was my answer. "Nottinghamshire!" he cried out,—"Then dun yo know ony body there as I know?" It is impossible for me to tell that, I said, before you have told me whom you know yourself. "Well, then," he rejoined, "dun yo know Paul Duffield?" What, I asked, do you mean Paul Duffield who keeps the Robin Hood, at Sutton-in-Ashfield? "Aye!" he shouted, in evident delight Well, then, said I, as it happens, I do know him. "Then gie us yer hand!" again cried the postman, "for hey's my brother-i'-law!"

On my naming this conversation to some friends in the neighbourhood, they at once exclaimed, "How like the man! why, it was poor Renshaw!" More than ten years passed away after that day, and on another almost equally fine and hot, I was again on the same spot, gazing on the same knoll of Cowms—or Coombs,—and talking with the same poor postman, as I at first saw him

time, not about his brother-in-law, Paul Duffield, but his sister, Paul Duffield's *widow*, to whom he gave me, in his rough way, a kindly and consoling message.

The next morning—Saturday—I was loitering at Matlock Bath. It was a very lovely morning. The rocks were festooned with their greenest verdure; the river was sending up its most joyous shout; the sky had thrown over all its purest and brightest azure; and all that was needed to complete my enjoyment was some occupation or adventure befitting the scene. But what, said I to Bryan, the guide, as we neared the door of the Rutland Arms, is the meaning of this gathering from the hills of dejected and anxious looking people, and these vagabond-looking fellows, who are lingering somewhat apart from them? "The vagabonds," said Bryan, "are witnesses employed by a common informer; and that crowd of people are his victims, with the witnesses in their favour. The cases are about to be heard within, before the magistrates; and, if you like, you can go in with me and note what passes." So in we went, together.

One of the first persons we saw inside, was the informer himself. As he had not made his own forehead, or intentionally put out one of his own eyes, I will not dwell long on the fact, that the former, as Shakspere has it, was "villainous low," and that, all contingencies taken into account, he looked exceedingly queer without the latter. He was certainly one of the most sinister looking rascals it has ever been my lot to meet; and when he pretended to know something about me, and to have seen me before, I "denied the

soft impeachment" with disgust. As he persevered, however, in pretending to have seen me before, I happened to ask him,—I don't remember why,—if it was at Chesterfield. "No," he replied, "it couldn't be there; I never was at Chesterfield since I was born." And upon this incidental assertion of his hangs the sequel.

Two magistrates having now taken possession of the bench, the crowd of victims and witnesses were ushered in: Bryan, as a reporter, stood a little apart, with me by his side. The evidence, in the first case, was then hastily gone through; and the defendant—a poor widow of the name of Young, who kept a public-house at Howay—fined five pounds and ordered to have her license suspended. To me, her case seemed cruel and heart-rending. Her house was many miles from the parish church; and, on a Sunday morning, during the hours of service, the witness against her had used all possible persuasion to get her to fill him a glass of ale. She was, however, impervious, until he appealed to her compassion, representing himself as a traveller, faint and weary, and stirring all the better feelings of her nature in his behalf;—and this was her cruel reward! My blood boiled within me, as the next case came on; and there were several more to follow, should they meet with no check.

But in this second instance, instead of a poor, defenceless widow, the defendant was a sturdy person, hard as nails, and quite resolved not to be beaten easily. When the informer—the man with one eye—pretended to have had nothing to do with the case, except in laying the information, the defendant pressed him to say where

he was at the time the drink was served—was he not near, and had he not himself given the witness instructions relative to the laying of the trap? "No" was his reply, "I was nowhere near." "Where were you then?" again asked the defendant. "*At Chesterfield*," he replied, with some confusion of manner.

Now, thought I, comes my turn, you wretches! and pushing up to the bench, I begged the magistrates to let me give evidence.

"Who calls you?" asked one of them.

No one—said I.

"Then you can't be heard," he replied.

But I must—said I.

"But you can't," said he.

"But he shall," said the other magistrate.

"But if he is neither called nor sworn," said the first, "we cannot hear him."

I cannot be sworn, I said, but the law will recognise my affirmation; and I can give evidence of great importance to the case.

"For the information or against it," asked the magistrates.

Against it—I replied.

"But as none of the witnesses call you, you are doing wrong to offer it," said the first magistrate.

"I should very much like to hear it, however," said the second; "and as no other course is open to you, state it to me as personal information."

In the other room, said I, and not half an hour since, the fellow who stands there declared to me, in the presence of Mr. Bryan, that *he had never been at Chesterfield*

since he was born ; and *now he says he was at Chesterfield on the day in question!* I want to affirm that he is not to be believed on his oath.

"There's a pretty rascal!" said the second magistrate.

"We can't take that in evidence," cried the first; "will you not convict?"

"No, not on the oaths of any such scoundrels!" said the second emphatically; and the proceedings terminated in the most delectable confusion.

An attempt was made to bring forward the cases again, at Wirksworth, on the following Tuesday; but the townspeople having heard the story, were prepared to give the informer a public ducking the moment he made his appearance; and his exit that morning was far quicker than his entrance. My deep regret was, that my own part in the business had not occurred before the conviction of the poor old widow, who, I believe, got her license renewed, and still lives in the same same house at Howay, where the weary traveller may find rest, a homely meal if he needs, and one of the fairest prospects in Derbyshire to glance at while he eats it.

Chapter Twenty-Third.

CAELSWARK AND HU-GAER.

HITHERTO, all our approaches to the Peak have been chiefly from the Nottinghamshire side of the county. Let us now see what aspects it presents as approached from Hallamshire.

It is very pleasant, as we bend round this green projection called Brinkcliffe Edge—at which point Sheffield becomes hidden behind us—to see how sweetly the country opens up to our right, with all its pastures, corn fields, and woods; while villas, hamlets, and cots, embosomed among them, smile, as it were, amid such a profusion of natural fruitfulness and beauty for very delight. But it is even still more pleasant, and far more exhilarating, after passing the mansion and plantations of Banner Cross, where all the varied richness of Abbey Dale bursts at once upon the eye to our left; and to our right appear

> "These plots of cottage ground, these orchard tufts,
> Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
> Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
> Among the woods and copses, nor disturb

> The wild green landscape— * * *
> These hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little lines
> Of sportive wood run wild; these pastoral farms,
> Green to the very door"—

While the bold-browed moorlands seem *advancing* towards us, with vast silver-edged masses of cloud upon their shoulders, on which to bear the day to his evening couch of mountains.

And now we are beginning to gulp the moorland air, and even to *feel* our proximity to moorland scenes. Nay, already, in less than an hour's walk, we have exchanged entirely the warm exhalations of the new-mown hay-field, and of the wild-rose and honeysuckle hedge that borders it—together with the morning carol of the merry dairy-lass, the multifarious voices of the way-side fold-yard, the milk-lad's whistle, and the ringing scythe—all, indeed, that gladdened our senses or engaged our attention below—save perhaps some waggon's *mutter*, faint and slow, along the far-off turnpike, —we have exchanged all besides for scenes and circumstances as dissimilar as if they belonged to another sphere of existence. For the soft, warm, balmy breathings of the fields and gardens, we have a cool vigorous breeze that speaks to us of the heather, the wild-fern, the rock-moss, and the rain-cloud; and if besides its gusty voice there be a single sound, it is that of the wild bird flying away in fear, at our approach. While, instead of the little hamlet clustering where three lanes meet, and the ivy-gabled cottage sheltering under the wing of a wood from which its roof of brown thatch and its clumpy chimney scarcely protrude; with occasional halls and villas, as we so recently contemplated them.

filling up the scene, and giving a character of *neighbourhood* to the whole by their studied relationship to each other;—instead of these we have, though remarkably "few and far between," grey, cold-looking, lonesome houses, shelfed between the edge of the sky and the ridge of the landscape, as if they belonged neither to this world nor the next;—or greyer, colder, and lonelier still, some old, forsaken, druidical monument, the silent representative of long forgotten ages.

Such is the scene, and such its associations, as we pass out of the peopled region of cultivation, into that of wild unaided Nature. Of course I speak but of general appearances and impressions—for it is very probable that if we had time to explore the country more minutely, we should find in some of the streamy hollows which intersect it, little green, bowery pastoral nooks, where happy homes seem to *grow* out of the scene as if they were a natural portion of it. Indeed, I have heard Ebenezer Elliott inquire, in his own apt and beautiful language, if such dwellings are not as natural to the localities they occupy, as is the lark's nest to its tuft, or the falcon's to its cliff.

Fox House Inn, and the Duke of Rutland's celebrated moorland haunt at Longshaw, we leave behind us. Though really somewhat modern, they are antique, grey-looking places, in fine keeping with the surrounding country, and speak well for the taste of the person who designed them, whoever he might be. We will return to them in a while.

But don't you begin to feel the solemn gloom of Antiquity and Solitude falling upon you here? Hark,

how wildly that stream goes shouting along its sinuous path in the deep, dusky valley! Nature has done nothing in vain—she did not give that wandering rivulet its solemn voice from creation for nought; though its language may not be interpreted by every mind. Does it not make you think of the "sons of God" and the mighty giants which the Scriptures say were wont of old to walk the earth? It has, I must confess, that effect on me, especially when I gaze upon the sublime and ancient evidences of physical power around us.

About six furlongs from Fox House we cross this stream (the Burbedge Brook,) and bearing up to the right, knee-deep in ling, bilberry wires, ferns, bents, and mossy stones, we come in about another half-mile to a place known even now by its old Saxon name of Caelswark, *i. e.*, the Work of the Caels, or Gaels—the earliest inhabitants of this island. I cannot tell the precise extent of these stupendous masses; but they occupy a lofty oval platform of perhaps two acres, and overlook a vast outstretch of country to the South and East. It is very remarkable that neither Camden, the earliest writer I have consulted, or Rhodes, the latest, make any allusion to this place at all; or to the circle, rocking-stone, and other Druidical remains on the contrary side of the road, near Padley Wood. My old friend, D'Ewes Coke, Esq., always laughs at me for associating these works with the Druids, and quotes, from Tacitus, "Omne ignotum pro magnifico est." And though certainly the action of water, (as on the coast of Durham,) might partly account for the vestiges of rock-basins and boat-shaped rocking-stones, which

abound to a surprising extent,—and four of which, notwithstanding the accumulated weeds and soil of ages, will still yield to the force of the human arm; while many others, I cannot tell how many, lie about dilapidated or clod-hidden, or only partially seen;—I still must believe that these rocks were adopted and adapted by human agency for some such purpose as that suggested, however loth to differ from one whose judgment in many things I should defer to with the utmost respect. The platform presents its sublimest aspect to the east, where an enormous stone, (is it in rude imitation of the Ark?) appears half-launched into the sky from the top of a rocky projection, and beneath which two wedges of gritstone serve just to sustain it in its perilous position. Along the southern side of the platform, and at its western end, portions of a massive wall, well-built, though without cement, yet remain; and it revives some curious associations if we recal the attachment of the Druids to that tree, when a stunted oak, probably, from its appearance, the successor of one once more powerful but now decayed, is seen waving its branches in this part of the ruin. The demolition of this work, whether it were formed by Nature and destroyed by water in a former state of the world; or man's, and destroyed in turn by man; is in either case sufficiently wonderful. On the north and north-eastern sides, it would seem that vast piles of stones, most of them many tons in weight, had all been undermined, and plunged in one dread commotion deep into the valley beneath, where, lying one upon another, they now form a scene of desolation indescribable.

Within a mile north-west of these ruins, rises another platform to a height still greater, and possessing a level area of perhaps seven acres. It is called by the inhabitants of the neighbourhood "Higgar," which I take to be a corruption of "Hu Gaer," *i. e.*, the city of God. On its southern side stands an immense pile of stones, —a sort of cromlech, like those at Stonehenge, each component several tons in weight. The topmost, one would think must necessarily have been placed there by artificial means, however natural may appear the condition of those at the base. And a great natural tor, called by the country people "the Slifter," stands slightly apart at the western extremity. How admirable the position and form of this place for the purpose we have supposed! Commanding, with the exception of some very slight interruptions, a complete horizon of not less than two hundred miles—no body of men could approach it from any side without being observed long before their arrival; while its proximity to the luxuriant pastures of the Derwent Valley, as well as the pure springs of water sparkling upon its very top and gushing from its sides, all added their several advantages to that of its centrality and its altitude.

But here let us pause awhile in our ramble; for the soft beams of evening are tinting the locks of the far, far mountains; and half the horizon's verge, from Masson to Kinderscout, gleams in one long streak of pure and living gold. Hills, rocks, and woods, which at noonday quivered dimly and distantly through the haze of intense sunshine, draw nigh and look bold in

the nightfall's dusky hush. The breeze has gone to sleep on the moorland's lap; and the river's voice grows louder as its course becomes more obscure; and the bilberry-gatherers, having ceased their romantic toil, are pensively resting among the grey stones, won into contemplation by the quietness of the hour; while the owl comes from out its cave,—the conies from their tiny dens,—and the bat flaps by in the stilly gloom; as the gamekeeper stalks along yon upland ridge, drawn out to a giant stature between us and the lingering light; or stands, as Bloomfield says, "like a statue in the skies!" Amid scenes so wild and strange, and especially at such a time, how the mind turns back and ruminates on the character and habits of those who inhabited them in their day of power—watching them from their first origin to their final disappearance from the face of the land, or their dissipation among its succeeding possessors! How we love in imagination to trace their early migration from the remote regions of the East, and through the vast Scythian wilds, bringing down with them from primitive ages their ideal of the great Ark which saved mankind, and establishing its symbol here in these moving stones, emphatically described by contemporary bards as "the grey stones of power!"—And then we think of the long, long ages through which they exercised their authority as philosophers, priests, lawgivers, and physicians; and of Cæsar, and Tacitus, and Quintus Cicero, at length coming amongst them when that authority was almost ripe for shedding, and seeing them with myriads of people congregated around them, even yet superintending the

erection of their rude and mighty altars and monuments among the wilds of nature. This was done by such huge blocks of dark stone as here lie around us being piled one on another, through the means of great inclined planes of earth—up which they were rolled by ardent devotees, who deemed that they propitiated the Deity by such labour. And do we not also bethink us of the correspondence of such a dispensation to the people and the times, preparatory to the introduction of a more spiritual and benign religion, of which even some of the old Druids themselves had prophesied? Certainly we do; and then, as a natural sequence, we muse in hope on the progress of humanity, step by step, to its final emancipation, as time draws nearer to the meridian of "bright and perfect day."

Chapter Twenty-Fourth.

VIEW FROM MILLSTONE EDGE.

IN days gone by, when fancy rather than science dictated my thoughts, writing my "Rambles in the Country," I said—The Peak of Derbyshire appears as if composed of a number of immense billows, crested with bristling crags, and having in some great commotion of nature dashed myriads of ponderous stones about like spray, that on the subsiding of the elements lay scattered, not only over the plains, but even on the highest hill-tops, in that wild and grotesque disorder which now puzzles the native as much as it surprises the stranger, inspiring every beholder with mingled emotions of curiosity, admiration, and awe.

Whoever hath stood on the sea-coast during a calm evening, and contemplated the insetting of the tide, will remember the bold and almost perpendicular front presented by the majestic waves, as they have come foaming towards him in solemn succession. Let any one who has been favoured with that sight imagine this portion of the earth, originally in a half-fluid state, to

have been influenced in a ten-thousandfold degree by a similar motion to that which forms those waves with their abrupt fronts, their sloping backs, their beautiful crests of foam and scatterings of spray—let him, I repeat, imagine such a motion suddenly curbed by some great antagonistic power; and in contemplating the consequences, he will at once have the ground-work of a spectacle like that which the Peak of Derbyshire presents to the eye, now clothed and beautified by the vegetation of half a century of centuries, and all the additions and variations which God, and Nature, and Man, and the beasts of the field, and fowls of the air have made in that long, long period.*

Bear in mind, for a moment, the simile of the waves. The heights with abrupt fronts are locally denominated *Edges:* and these Edges, as they almost invariably overlook broad but curving sunny dales, counter-lit with streams, enriched with woods and pastures, roamed by herds and flocks—and sprinkled or dotted all over with human habitations—are most desirable haunts for him who delights in wreathing his pencil's touches with the charms of ideality. For myself, believing with Wordsworth, that

> "Nature never did betray
> The heart that loved her,"

I have wooed and won ecstasy from her in almost all her moods, and subjected my sympathies to all her impulses, till by habituation they will flow as easily with a stream as linger with a flower—will concentre in

* I must beg the reader to take this poetically, as an illustration of present appearances,—not scientifically, as a theory of actual causes.

the tiniest grot or expand over the broadest landscape —and find the affinity of objects there to some of the noblest, tenderest, and sweetest principles which actuate humanity;—but I have never been able thoroughly to analyse or define the thrill, the throb of emotion, that answers to the appeal of a Derbyshire dale, as it suddenly bursts upon me when my wandering genius leads me to one of these edges; or to describe the awesome, yet tranquil and delicious feeling into which the mind gradually subsides after the first onbreak, as the glowing scene begins gradually to map itself on the brain. Of the scenes, however, which have so influenced me,—and I have dwelt on many, many very beautiful ones,—that from Millstone Edge, near Hathersage, appears to be one of the most perfect; and to it we now come.

The season was, as now, summer—the hour somewhat before noon—the breeze fresh from the west, with a deep blue sky, over which were scattered, apparently above that breeze's influence, beautiful soft clouds, some white and nearly transparent; others bossy—dun in the centre, but glowing round the edges with the brightest fringes of light,—and the blooming heather on which I trod emitted fresh fragrance at every step, as I first passed from the old grey haunts of Caelswark to Millstone Edge. Oh, it was just like passing out of some dim, worn-out world, all in a moment, to a new one and a better! There, afar off, under the southern sun, and scarcely so dense to look at as the sky into which their blue tops melted, glowed along the horizon the Wolds of Leicestershire,—and, mayhap, of Stafford-

shire too. Directly before me, to the south-west, with a greenness almost from its distance as soft as the blue already mentioned, stretched the ridge of Great Hucklow from behind the Calver Hills towards the neighbourhood of Castleton, entirely bounding the prospect in that direction. While far up in the west and north-west the dim scenes of the Peak Forest threw off their mantles of mist in the face of day, and retreated, one beyond another, away, as it were, into the regions of etherial space.

Have I given you an idea of the *extent* of this landscape? If so, you may think next of *a sublime procession of mountains* advancing from among those vast, dim western scenes I have described, above Castleton, and growing bolder and more striking on its near approach,—Win Hill, "King of the Peak," clad in a bloomy purple haze, foremost in the train,—followed successively by Lose Hill and three or four others, in garbs of the same hue; with Mam Tor bringing down the rear, grave and dignified as a seer from antiquity—and all attended by minor hills, as pages, in liveries of many-shaded green, not less graceful if less majestic;—while the heights of Bamford, Stanedge, and Rushop, with all their lesser attendants, had hurried, as it were, from the north in a throng to see them come—adding that secondary but impressive and eager interest to the spectacle which a multudinous populace give to the triumphal march of some great potentate. But why do that royal train pause in contemplation there? Is it because they have come to gaze on this beautiful dale, this luxuriant paradise, outspread far and wide below

us—*are* gazing—and are satisfied? One might almost imagine so—and why should we not? Lo, where opposite us, Offerton Hill seems to swell in its repose, grand as a lion couched at rest; while the bold mountain, "Sir William," towers by its side into the sky, proud and sublime as the Genius of our country—waving his woods in solemn approbation of the scene around him! Oh, were it not a scene almost for angels to delight in? But if such be the character of those grander features which first catch our observation from Millstone Edge—if the loftier objects of the landscape so strike the spirit—how shall we depict the living beauties below, which hold it in so delicious a thraldom? See now with what grace yon river, the Derwent, "throws its blue length like a snake from high," and winds along the centre with all the freshness and vivacity of a thing of life, as it feels for a time the sun and breeze, then rushes into the woods again with a shout, only again to emerge among new scenes of luxuriance and loveliness. How weak, how dim, are all the noblest and brightest creations of romance, compared with the realities we here behold! Talk not of Arcadian scenes to an inhabitant of yon dale: he will only tell you in return that you are under a mistake—that the place you are describing is Hazelford Meadows—only that you don't quite come up to his notion of the original.

See afar off in the vale, where, like a line on a map, that road winds into indistinctness, and where the courses of streams can only be traced by their dusky trains of foliage,—where the fields are squared out like little green diamonds, while the herds grazing among

them are diminished to the tiniest specks,—there you may observe, greyly gathered together, the church and houses of the village of Hope, scarcely so large to the eye as a city of Liliput; and the smaller perhaps because of the great hills between which they are clustered. Then mark, as the dale widens towards us, how its objects gradually enlarge, till each one is displayed in its full form and effect. How pleasant it is to see so many homesteads of every grade, from the stately hall to the lowly cot, all contributing to one grand scheme of loveliness and peace,—or, if otherwise, the fault of those who inhabit, not of Him who planned it! Long would be the task, and incomplete when ended, to delineate all that enters into this lovely picture. Knolls of fresh green verdure—woods all solemnly waving—subsidiary bosky dells, or cloughs—gathering villages and dispersing hamlets—with many a manorial mansion and solitary cot, the one commanding its expanded lawn, the other quietly nursed in its umbrageous little garden—all spontaneously combine to fill up a scene of beauty so tastefully proportioned by Nature throughout, that it would apparently lose its harmony were one single feature removed!

In this little sketch I have hitherto confined myself, chiefly, to the *upward* view of Hathersage Dale,—but it is not less delightful as it draws *downward* to its close —a close that is occasioned by the various objects in the landscape thickening and mingling together, rather than by any single one predominating over the rest; unless, indeed, it be the trosachy clough running down from Leam Hall to the Woods near Grindleford Bridge,

among whose foliage the Derwent becomes entirely lost to the eye; after which the hills begin to lose much of their distinctness—their tops forming an undefinable but imposing perspective range from Calver Peak as far as Matlock, where the pine-capped heights of Masson and Wirksworth Moor are prominent and closing features of the scene.

And now I have given you a glimpse of this noble prospect—this delicious specimen of the Derbyshire Dales;—only a glimpse, mind! not a picture. Good faith, he who accomplishes the latter must have a more masterly hand than mine! But you will come sometimes and have a look at it yourself, in person, won't you? I should like every care-worn son of the town to enjoy "an outing" like this, at least once a year; because I am sure it would make him a better man both in soul and body every time he indulged in it. It would expand his mind, his heart, and his lungs, all in one operation. It would make him so thankful to God for his existence—for creating such a wonderful and beautiful world, and giving him a capacity to appreciate it—that he would turn every mound and rock into a shrine of thanksgiving and praise. He would, amid these fragments of a former world, and these pleasures of the present, involuntarily become prophetic of the future, and recognize in the discursive power of his own spirit one comforting evidence of its own immortal nature. He would also learn to imitate the bounty and goodness displayed around him, because his own heart would be leavened by their influence; and he would thence feel more at peace with himself,

and more in charity with all mankind. And having renovated his blood with health, by many and long inspirations of this pure mountain air, he would return to his home in new hope and joy; otherwise I am altogether mistaken in my man, and he is not the one for whom I am penning these passing memorials—he belongs, alas, to the tribe of Peter Bell, the Potter, of whom 'tis said, that, despite all its sweet vernal associations,

> "A primrose by the river's brim,
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> But it was nothing more."

I am, however, happy in believing that there are much fewer people of his character in existence than when that odd piece of biography was turned into enduring verse by

> "Wordsworth, whose thoughts acquaint us with our own,"

and who has taught us so well to guage our mind by its power to render nature subservient to its own expansion and exaltation.

But, farewell, for the present, to Millstone Edge! We will now drop down under the shade of these grey old rocks, on which the ruins of that cottage so grotesquely cling among heaps of loose stony fragments,—and where the heather, the fern, the foxglove, and the thistle so wildly grow with the wild birch and mountain ash,—to enjoy the glowing prospect on our left, in a quiet half-hour's walk to the village of Hathersage, the "Heather's-edge" of former days, and then take a glance, perhaps, at the hills and caves and antiquities farther up the vale.

Chapter Twenty-Fifth.

HATHERSAGE VILLAGE.

IT has not always been in the full glow of a summer noon that I have approached the village of Hathersage. I have descended upon it from Hu Gaer, in the calm and mellow flush of a twilight hour; from Highlow, in a flood of sunshine, after the breaking of a thunder storm; and once by the way we are now taking, from Millstone Edge, in as cloudless, breezeless, and moonlight a night, as ever a fairy revelled or a poet mused in. Beautiful at all times—the whole scene was peculiarly so at each of these; but most so at the last. It was one of those occasions on which the mind is soothed into subjection by the presence of a holy peace, till it seems to rise out of itself in a second and superior nature, and claiming a high kinship and a glorious destiny, whisper its own thought of a time when even this earth shall be the abode of a more happy and exalted race of beings. And who can say that it shall not be so? Does not Geology furnish us with evidence of a former state of the world more brutish than the

present: while it has hitherto failed to afford a single proof of its prehabitation, by beings of intelligence equal to that of man? And since it has gained so much in beauty and intellectuality by former revolutions, how shall it deviate from a universal law, by gaining less than before in a future and inevitable change? All things improve by transposition and cultivation. The seedling flower of this year shall bloom larger and fairer in the next, after rising in new life from its winter's sleep. The same rule applies to everything beside. And it is because of this comforting principle of universal progression that the happier and sublimer scenes of nature corroborate our faith in the renovation of the world. Our theme, however, at present requires a variation from this mood; for Hathersage itself is not so quiescent a village as to let us pursue such abstract musings in the day-time without interruption; since, to tell the truth, I have seen many towns boasting of markets and posting inns, with fewer indications of actual industry than meet us here.

Just before coming to the southern entrance of the village, the traveller passes through the Booths—a wide-scattered hamlet of stone-built and sycamore-shaded cottages, each fronted with its own garden and backed by its own croft, and looking out on the broad dale as cheerfully and comfortably as if it felt its own peculiar share in the happy prospect. The Booths are, however, now behind us, and here is the village itself, as thoroughly English as ever rambler dropped into!

It stands partly in the open of a sort of bay, running in between two green hills, and terminating under the

Gaer, from the front of which comes a wild rivulet called the Dale Brook, murmuring to itself along its rocky path, and after running nearly the whole length of the street, wedding another stream on its way to the Derwent. In the upper part of the village, the neat little church stands amidst rural habitations; and though lofty compared with the grey buildings from among which its pretty spire shoots up, the contrast of the great hills around gives it an air of humility, which would not belong to it in a more open position.

Overshadowed by tall trees, and, with the exception of one or two slight glimpses, excluded from public view, stands the manorial mansion of the Shuttleworths, somewhat lower, but not far from the church;—and near to the church-yard side, is an artificial mount, about three furlongs in circumference, called Camp Green. It is surrounded by a moat, which was formerly fed by a clear little stream coming down from Car Head, and is evidently the relic of an important Saxon or Danish fortification. There is a square block of stone projecting from a wall a short distance above the Needle-factory, which is not unworthy of mention. It is called the Gospel Stone, from having been in former times, (as were two more in other parts of the township,) occupied by the clergyman, who stood upon it on three different days in Rogation Week to pray for an abundant supply of the fruits of the earth. This custom, I am informed, was discontinued before the close of the last century.

The lower part of the village runs for about a quarter of a mile along the Castleton turnpike; and displays in

the style of its cottages nearly every order of rustic architecture,—one house having as many gables as rooms, an aspect nearly as hoary as Caelswark rocks, and with little windows in stone frames, so old and small that they seem almost to be blinking as if the sunshine were too much for them; but with others near it as new and prim as little suburban villas.

Crossing a clear stream called the Hay, that brings music in its waters from the woody dells of Brookfield, let us steal up this shady avenue to the right—there is sure to be something uncommon in such a calm, sequestered spot;—and so there is! You see by the cross crowning the gable of that neat old building, that the Roman Catholic chapel is here, and that this is the dwelling of the priest by its side. Far as I am from being a Roman Catholic, I could not gaze upon such a spot without some touch of interest. Think of the long ages during which our forefathers worshipped in such places! Think, too, of the faithful few, who, when devastation and terror were spread far and wide among their brethren, held by their altar in this mountain-nook, with a firmness which has enabled numbers of families here to say that they have descended through an unbroken line of Catholic ancestry! And do not overlook the sincerity which must have been required to sustain them through the persecutions and contentions of three hundred years, while creed after creed has arisen around them and become dissipated:—and then, methinks, however little hold their doctrines may have on our opinions, you will feel with me the solemnity of their old places of worship, lingering like the memory of ancient music in your heart

I doubt whether there is another parish in the kingdom constituted like this. It is one of the few places from which neither the persecution of kings and queens, the exercise of delegated power by local authorities, or the force of public opinion, have ever been able to extirpate Roman Catholicism—though, if tradition be correct, it has not flinched from furnishing martyrs in behalf of that faith. Even during the bitterest times mass was said, and confession made in the chamber of a cottage; whilst the present chapel stood a scathed and roofless ruin, here in the valley, by the moaning rivulet's side. There is little doubt that one of the greatest causes of this stability has been the exemplary piety, charity, and devotion of some of the priests resident in the place—whose practical goodness, if all be true that is related of them, would have shed a lustre on any faith. Of one of them, Mr. Eyre, who lived to a remarkable old age, a word or two may be said without offence to any one. I do not depend alone on the authority of his own flock for his character;—both Episcopalians and Methodists agree in this—that no man could be more pure in life, or more devout and less ostentatious in his religious observances: and for the rest, there are two facts which speak volumes. All his income, beyond what the necessities of a frugal board required, was devoted to the alleviation of distress—no matter where its abode; but in this application of his means, he always appeared as fearful of any one observing the ministering of his alms, as some people would be if they were going to steal as much;—and such was his tenderness of

heart, that rather than let John Fretwell, his gardener, destroy a reptile found about his grounds, he would carefully watch him while he took it away alive to some other place where it would be harmless. With pillars like that venerable man to support it, any church would stand in a place where it could once obtain a foundation in the human affections. But practical faith and charity are not confined to a sect.

In estimating the influence of different creeds on the social state of this village, I have mentioned the Catholic first, merely because of its seniority. It appears to have little other claim to prior distinction, as, if I am rightly informed, the Episcopalian and Wesleyan interests are as nearly as possible equal. There is a good test of this, on many accounts worth recording. Some time ago, the Parish Church was out of repair, and a subscription was entered into for its renovation, when Episcopalians, Catholics, and Wesleyans, contributed nearly equal sums to the fund—a fact creditable to the feelings of all concerned To those who may have observed in some places the disgusting contentions of different sects on abstract points of doctrine, and their consequent personal alienation and animosity, it is refreshing to find something like harmony among people of various professions, so equal in numbers, in a place like this. If there be emulation of any kind amongst them, I am told it is in striving for the credit of good works. I one day saw the catholic priest going into a shop to buy medicine for a poorly man of a different creed, and the same afternoon found the village curate, who in a round of visits

to his sick parishioners had just met with a weary wayfarer on the road, relieving him with more than one would think a curate's income would afford. These, though simple facts, are worth registering, because they are the index to very important principles.*

Like most other villages in the Dales, Hathersage retains many of our old rural customs. There lately appeared, in a popular periodical, an elaborate apology for Gray's celebrated Elegy, against some mighty fine critic who had accused the poet of an anachronism in his allusion to the "curfew bell." Both the accusation and the defence were alike impotent and needless. The curfew-bell is still rung in Hathersage from Michaelmas to Lady Day, at eight o'clock every evening—and in hundreds of English villages besides. Between Lady Day and Michaelmas a bell is also rung at five in the morning, to call the villagers up to their work.

When a person who is to be buried here dies out of the village, the "passing-bell" is always rung the evening before the funeral, to warn the parishioners to prepare for the approaching ceremony; and when, on the following day, the funeral arrives, the procession usually waits at one of the inns, while such of the inhabitants as have been on terms of relationship or intimacy with the deceased, assemble for the purpose of accompanying it to the Church.

On Christmas Eve almost every householder burns the "yule-log," and on the following day, various bands of minstrels begin to perambulate the neighbourhood, and in the course of a fortnight visit every house in

* This was written in 1841.

the parish; while a number of boys go about performing the old play of "St. George."

These, to some readers, may appear trifles—yet they are trifles which, in their way, are not without interest: they serve to inform us of the habits of our rude, unlettered ancestors—they are, in fact, rustic landmarks, by which we are enabled to note the progress of opinion.

In Hathersage I met with old John Fretwell. He was a right curious old chap, and an excellent stranger's guide—full of humour and anecdote, and moderate in his expectations of reward for his services, of which I occasionally availed myself. John was a bachelor of fifty-eight, and lived with his sister somewhere about the Church—but was soon ready to tip his *chapeau* to a traveller, down at the Ordnance inn. On his first introduction, I took him, from the peculiar expression of his phiz, his battered hat, the *cut* and *tear* of his tattered fustian jacket, the multifarious composition of his many-coloured hamsters, his grey darned stockings, and clouted shoes, to be a genuine son of "the sister isle"—a supposition considerably strengthened by his sprightly flourish of a "sprig of shillelah." In all this, however, I was entirely mistaken. John prided himself on his English descent through an unbroken line of catholic ancestry, who had flourished as cottiers in the village of Hathersage from the earliest times, and related their history with the exultation of a Howard or a Percy tracing his pedigree, and also furnished (if required) some details of his own individual life and experience, with the greatest good humour imaginable. He also mentioned one

or two incidents in natural history—one of them incredible enough: but to which you must attach just what importance you may think it merits.

He said that, some years ago, a number of women went from the village to the moor under Caelswark, to get ferns for burning and manufacturing ash-balls, which at that time were used as a substitute for soda. During the progress of their work, their attention was attracted to a very small aperture in one of the ponderous stones that lie scattered so plentifully in that neighbourhood, and through which a number of bees continued to issue and return during the whole of the day. Their husbands being informed of the fact at night, went next morning, smothered the bees, and split the stone open, when, in a wide central cavity, to which there had been no previous ingress but by the before-mentioned little aperture, they found eighty pounds of good honey to reward them for the discovery.

The more marvellous anecdote is, that John was himself, on one occasion, loitering on the moor, near the Nightingale-brook, between Millstone Edge and Burbedge-bridge, when he found a newt, or lizard, with *two heads*—one at each end of its body. Like other newts, it had four legs, but with this peculiarity—each pair of feet pointed away from the other towards one of the heads; and it had the power of running either way with equal facility! Though the discovery of such an animal was curious enough to John, as his acquaintance with natural history was but limited he did not think it would interest other people so much; so, after toying with it for a while, he killed it (as he supposed)

with a stick, and left it on a stone, not far from the road. Naming it, however, soon after to a person whom he chanced to meet, and being assured of its rarity, they returned together to the spot where he had left it, but from which it had entirely disappeared. He thought, himself, that it had been found and eaten by a glead-hawk; but his companion supposed it possible that it had retained its vitality, and so hastened away immediately on its recovery.

Poor John survived but a short time his relation to me of these real or imaginary particulars, and is now gathered to the long line of his catholic ancestors, who lie around the grave of Little John, in the "auld kirk-yard."

The Church itself is well calculated to interest the traveller—there is something more than common about its monuments and its history. In it lies an old English gentleman of the name of Eyre, one of whose ancestors, it is said, saved William the Conqueror's life on the field of Hastings. At one time, seven manors within sight of each other belonged, it is said, to seven members of this family—the present head of which is the Earl of Newburgh.

A corpse was taken up in this place, in the year 1781, quite white, and petrified as hard as flint. It was that of Mr. T. Ashton, buried fifty-six years before. The fact is mentioned by several writers. Jenny Sherd saw it reared *upright* in the Church, whilst the grave was preparing for its re-interment. It fell, however, along the aisle, when its head broke off. Her father tried to cut a piece out of its back with a saw, to pre-

serve as a relic; but the saw would not make the slightest incision.

The Church-tower is furnished with a melodious peal of bells, which have a thrilling effect upon the loitering wanderer, as their tones swell and die about him with the breezes among the hills; or float by his ear, in the valleys, in a current of soft sound, mellow and tender as the memory of wild harpings, when bards like Ossian assembled on the surrounding lows, and poured the songs of other times on the ear.

But one of the most interesting of all objects that catch the attention here, is the sight of a number of withered chaplets and garlands, within the church, hanging among the mouldered monuments and fading escutcheons, above some neglected tombs, in the north aisle. Mr. Rhodes very touchingly alludes to them on his visit to this place, as being brought to the church, when young unmarried women died, by their companions of early years, who in performing the last affecting offices of friendship, accompanied the bier of the deceased with these garlands, composed of wreaths of flowers, and every emblem of youth, purity, and loveliness that imagination could suggest. "There is," says he, "something simple and affecting in this village custom, and one cannot but regret that it is now almost entirely discontinued." The good tourist was right; one would not dislike to see the custom revived in every village of our fine old country. It is not the poetry, but the superstition of the times that were, from which it is desirable the heart should shrink.

Chapter Twenty-Sixth.

SOURCES OF THE DERWENT.

WHAT a numerous family of rivers are the Derwents! I have myself seen about half-a-dozen of the name. One flows into the sea, near Scarborough; another falls into the Ouse, near Howden, in Yorkshire; one—the Durham Derwent—into the Tyne, near Gateshead; another—the fairest of them all—feeds the lakes of Derwentwater and Bassenthwaite, in Cumberland, then falls into the sea at Workington. There is also the Darent in Kent; and this, that rises among the hills which divide the county of Derby from Yorkshire, and forces its way through the shire into the Trent, at Wilne. There is no lack of hypotheses as to the etymology of the name—though the one that seems to me most obvious I have never seen attempted. The Latin word *torrens*, a rushing stream, whence comes our English word *torrent*, synonymous with the German *durch-wend*, for *through-went*, would give a common origin, almost self-evident, to the *Trent*, *Darent*, *Derwent*, as well as the *Tarenta*, in Italy, and many others: and it is worthy of note, too, that most of the inhabitants of

the country round about Cromford and Crich, when speaking of this river, call it, with a peculiar accent, *Darrandt*, coming very near to the German pronunciation of the synonyme. And how applicable such a name to any one of these streams: but not more so to any of them than that of Derbyshire!

Once I made one of a party who fitted out a waggon, at Sheffield, on a pilgrimage to its source; and as motley but happy a set we were, as ever went out on a land-cruise since the world began. We started between four and five o'clock in the morning, up the valley of the Rivelin to Mosscar Gate, and then descended by Ladybower Brook, under Ladybower Wood, to Ashopton, where we gypsied and partook our first meal. And, though happy, we were not boisterous: for the charm of those scenes lay upon us like a spell. The heights of Bamford, Rushop, Mosscar, Win Hill, and Lose Hill, with Kinderscout in the distance, waving their woods, or glowing with heather-bloom, or pouring down their waters to our very feet, were around us—haunted by rocks or other objects that bore such characteristic names as Mosscar Cross, Dove Stone Tor, Old Chapel, and Lost Lad. Our refreshment over, we again took the road to Derwent Village—an old but neat mansion, with a little church and small gathering of grey cottages—altogether one of the most primitive but pleasant little nooks a man of study and taste could retire to. Mr. John Read, the friend of Chantrey, lived here at the time, and shortly afterwards, I saw him standing by the Sculptor's grave, (at Norton,) on the day of his funeral. Not from any one in particular, but from a

great number of mossy cloughs, which the eye could trace in the surrounding hills, gathered to the point we had now reached the waters of the Derwent—a stream which, here, at the distance of more than forty miles from its estuary, might be safely leaped by a strong boy.

One of the largest feeders of the Derwent in these regions is the Ashop, a brisk, babbling stream that comes pouring down, through the Woodlands, from the sides of Kinderscout, which is said to be the highest hill in the county, and therefore a rival of Axe Edge. Snow has been known to linger on its northern side till midsummer. On its top is an old encampment, which during the ordnance survey, in 1841, happened to be occupied by a single soldier, who was returned as its inhabitant, in the census of that year.

A stream from a beautiful Oberlandish dell called Edale, and the Bradwell Brook, falling into the Nough —the water of which comes down out of the great Peak Cavern, at Castleton—making another important addition to the Derwent, in Hope Dale, ere it reaches Hathersage—would each well deserve a chapter to itself: but how could that be, where every valley has its stream, and every stream a beauty of its own—its beauty varied, too, by every season? On one occasion, instead of gipsying among these scenes in warm, sunny weather, as now, I was all alone amongst them in the very depth of winter; and nothing could surpass the grandeur of the frost-work then abounding on the rugged, rocky, rooty banks of all these streams. What fantastic formations! What glittering candelabra! What faëry lattice-work! What unimaginable, and

therefore indescribable, accumulations of all shapes,—many of them of matchless beauty; and, even where most monstrous, not devoid of it! A wonderful scene truly, is Nature's studio of frost-work!

Nor is her cloud-work at such times less grand than her frost-work is fair. Riding, on one of those days, along the road from Millstone Edge to Hathersage, all the valley below me was filled with great folds of the whitest cloud, as was the sky around and above with the purest sunshine. I studied the phenomenon, and waited the process of its development. It seemed to have been begun as the sun had gained power to render the atmosphere warmer than the earth, which was covered with snow. First, a thin, light vapour began to form, just over the beds of the rivers, and then, folding itself into a beautiful wreath, arose gently into the air, becoming more dense as it slowly ascended; whilst other wreaths formed, followed and joined it, one after another, till the whole valley was filled with them from side to side. Then, as the sunshine came down upon it, all those bright and fleecy appearances lay *below* for which we are more apt to look *upwards* into the sky,—until, at length, one portion rolled away over the mountain-tops, before the action of the winds; the rest falling backwards on the meadows, in the shape of dew, where it was soon frozen into myriads of sparkling gems.

Such was the way in which Nature taught me how the ancients derived their ideas of gods and goddesses being born of the rivers and then ascending into the heavens. How many things may be learnt when we go to school to Nature!

Chapter Twenty-Seventh.

A GLANCE AT CASTLETON.

ASSUMING that, while lingering about Hathersage, discursions have been made to North Lees Hall and High Low,—antiquated houses with curious histories,—one to the north of the village, near the source of the Hay-brook, under Stanedge; and the other to the south-west, by the side of a dark ravine in Offerton Hill, called Dunge Clough; and supposing that we have glanced as well at the old Roman station of Brough, and the pretty village of Hope, and made a detour to Bradwell Cavern by the way; we now find ourselves in the village of Castleton, the scene of Scott's "Peveril of the Peak;" and perhaps there is no part of the district where are concentred in the same space so many wonders and curiosities as here. Amongst the ill-informed, at a distance, an idea prevails that *The Peak* is a name for one great mountain alone; while, in truth, it applies rather to several mountain ranges of various altitudes and shapes, extending over half the county, and into Staffordshire, Cheshire, and Yorkshire.

—with here and there a peak striking up from among the rest, to qualify the name: and this description applies peculiarly to the country round Castleton.

Bounded on three sides by steep hills and rocks, worthy of being called sublime; abounding in vast caverns, exhausted lead-mines, and shattered fortifications; and open on the fourth side to the far-stretching beauties of that pastoral dale sketched from Millstone Edge, down into which from its very street flow the clear waters of a tributary of the Nough or Nowe; and in itself a neat and pleasant village, with excellent inns, geological museums, and shops for natural curiosities; one might almost call Castleton the Keswick of Derbyshire,—bearing in mind always, however, that the Peak has no lakes, but many charms of its own to make up in some degree for the want of them.

Upon a rock, accessible only on one side, and scarcely on that, stands what is left of Peveril Castle. On an opposite mountain, called Mam Tor, (Mother Mountain,) and which has been for ages shaling and shivering away, yet seeming as if it would still last as long as the world, are plainly to be seen the remains of a Roman encampment;—while down at its foot is Odin's or Woden's Mine, evidently, by its name, well known to the Saxons. Beyond these are strange, wild, rock-ribbed hills, through which is the pass of the Winyetts, or Wind-gates, into the region of Peak Forest—the name being derived from its being the only inlet or outlet for the winds, except to the east; so that the occasional rush and roar through such a passage must

be, beyond all description, rough and loud. Though of a different character, I think it may be fairly said to rival Wordsworth's famous pass of Kirkstone in its interest for the tourist—especially for the scientific tourist.

In the *Blue-John Mine*, whence is obtained the finest fluor spar, perhaps, in the world, are caverns resembling the chapter-house and aisles of a Gothic cathedral; grottos of crystal that sparkle like fairy-halls; and incrustations that appear like avalanches of snow suspended in their fall, or foaming cataracts suddenly struck motionless and silent by frost.

In the *Speedwell Mine* * is a subterranean canal, more than the third of a mile in length, where the sound of a passenger's tread on the bottom of the boat reverberates like thunder softened into a solemn melody; while a tone of his voice is amplified into a chord of music; and the burning of a Bengal light, further on, discloses a tremendous cataract, descending with a roar from cleft to cleft in that underground world, on its way to the daylight at the foot of the Peveril Castle-rock, by a passage through the Great Peak Cavern.

This marvel of the nations, the *Great Peak Cavern*, has been written about so often, and by such a variety of authors, that it would be impossible for additional interest to be thrown into it by any new attempt, if the same Nature that constituted it a repository of wonders had not so diversified the tastes of men that no one is affected *precisely* the same as another by a contempla-

* During some sudden excitement that occurred in this remarkable place, was born Mr. Jeremy Royse, its present proprietor!

tion of the same objects. That which bows one man down with veneration and awe, inspires another only with curiosity or admiration, as their perceptions happen to accord with other and remoter, deeper or loftier, faculties of the mind. In the caverns about Castleton, however, of which this is the most famous, every chord of feeling—every spring of thought—from simple curiosity to profound adoration, is appealed to by the various objects that catch our attention, or by the various positions for contemplation into which we are thrown.

It is near where the ancient church and the neat village inns and homes nestle, as for shelter, almost under the old fortress, that its portal is found. No contrast can be more striking than the rural dale through which we have passed—so replete with all that a gentle and lively fancy could revel in—and this wild and sombre opening to the bosom of the mountains, where darkness holds perpetual sway. On each side the approach from the house of the guide rise eternal-looking rocks, almost perpendicularly, to the height of about 300 feet. From the foot of that on the left bursts forth the limpid brook, with which we make further acquaintance inside. It is the same that forms the cataract in the Speedwell Mine, where, if a feather or any other small floating body be thrown in, it seldom fails of finding its way out at this spot. Whilst beetling above is the castle-keep, from which

> Old Time bends down his visage grey,

And watches, through some verdure, those puny objects below that serve, by contrast, to give the beholder

a true idea of the stupendousness of what is around him.

The cavern opens somewhat in the form of an arch; but the vastness of its span takes away the effect of its altitude, until the spectator is completely under it and looks up. The moment he does this, a sense of his own littleness is inspired by the loftiness of the roof; and the novel use to which this magnificent space is devoted—its floor being ribbed out into a number of rope-walks, one rising amphitheatrically above another, and occupied by garrulous people, old and young, at work, with their burring wheels and grotesque-looking standards,*—their rude little, one-windowed, one-chimnied hut, like some ancient hermitage—the village voices, the stream's babble, and the "chaw-chaw" of fluskering daws, outside—the echoed whistling or singing of the oddly-dressed guides within—together with the thoughts of the solemn yet uncertain gloom he is about to penetrate—all awake new and mingled sensations with which he is unable to associate any recollection of old experiences.

Penetrating this recess about thirty yards, the roof is found gradually to lower, until we reach a twilight region where a little door is opened by the guide, and we find ourselves instantaneously in the realms of night, selecting our steps by the light of candles supplied at the outset of our exploration, which serve only, however, for a long time, just to make darkness visible by their flicker and twinkle. Stooping for twenty or thirty yards more, we come to a spacious opening, and

* An odd sort of upright, between a guide-post and a gibbet in appearance.

speedily find ourselves on the shore of a pool, at which is moored a small boat, its bottom covered with clean straw. Embarking in this, and laying ourselves flat backwards, we glide along, under a low arch of rock, for about fourteen yards, and then regain *terra firma*, where the Cavern opens into a space 220 feet in length, 200 feet broad, and in some parts 120 feet in height, but neither the roof or sides of which the light of candles is sufficient to reach. In this place we become startled with the rush of waters, sending up their voice from still deeper recesses, to which we descend by steps cut in the sand, and find in a torrent, among loose stones, the brook that boils up at the foot of the Castle-rock outside. Hence we soon come to "Roger Rain's House," an opening so named because of the incessant raining of water from its roof, and a little further still is another hollow called the Chancel, where are great masses of disjointed rock, incrusted with stalactites both curious and beautiful; and looking back from this part the spectator is surprised by a number of candles ranged in a distant cavern by some assistant to the guide, who contrives to place them there so quietly that there is not the least notice of them until they are seen. When, as is sometimes the case, a party of singers occupy that capacious and elevated gallery, the effect must be thrilling.

Still proceeding through other openings, called the "Devil's Cellar" and "Half-way House," we pass under three regularly formed natural arches to a place resembling in shape the interior of a bell. This is a very interesting part of the cavern—the fantastic forms of

the rocks, the gleaming spiracles in the roof, and the weltering and lapsing of the waters, all combining to fill the mind with a solemn pleasure unknown to those who have never sought Nature in her subterranean retreats. Here, or hereabouts, it is, that the guide climbs by rude "stemples" into a lofty and remote recess, for which the faculty of comparison can find no similitude; and suddenly striking a Bengal light, he throws open to the gaze a magnificent vault, in which he himself seems a weird spectre among the illuminated crags.

After this remarkable exhibition, and the firing of a blast which roars along the winding vaults like a chorus of thunders, and dies away at last in distant but savage mutterings, there is little to tempt a farther exploration, though tributary fissures are almost innumerable, and some of them very inviting to any of those daring adventurers whose motto is, "the greater the danger, the richer the relish." The length of this subterranean temple, including its many windings, is not less than 750 yards, and its greatest depth is upwards of 200 yards. It is formed almost wholly of limestone strata, rife with marine exuviæ, interserted here and there with chert. These matters, however, belong more to the department of the geologist, to whom we must now leave them.

It would be interesting, were it possible to ascertain the variety of impressions made by such a place upon all who have visited it. How different must it seem to the young ropers who work at its mouth, and who play at "hide-and-seek" in its recesses during their leisure

hours, from what it did to the Baron de Lambert, a Frenchman, who wrote in the guide's album, in 1821:—"If I should be possessed with the enviable desire of dying a saint, and of being one day placed in the court of heaven, or ranked in the holy calendar, I would select this gloomy spot to pass my life. Here, with a death's head placed before me, which I should look upon undisturbed, between a crucifix and a bible, I should live and die happy," &c! A queer, idle way, one thinks, of "living and dying happy." But every man to his choice. It is a fact that Joseph John Gurney, once held a Quaker's meeting in the same strange place,—not a bad acknowledgement, perhaps, that God is everywhere, in the earth beneath as well as in the skies above; and on springing from it, myself, once more into the glad sunshine, I felt, if I did not loudly utter, some lines adapted from Bloomfield:—

"ETERNAL POWER! from whom all blessings flow,
Teach me still more to wonder, more to know;
Let all thy handiworks, where'er they be,
Uplift my soul in raptures unto THEE;
And let me ever 'mid thy bounties raise
An humble note of thankfulness and praise!"

Chapter Twenty-Eighth.

"THE DESOLATION OF EYAM."

"Among the verdant mountains of the Peak
There lies a quiet hamlet, where the slope
Of pleasant uplands wards the north-winds bleak;
Below, wild dells romantic pathways ope;
Around, above it, spreads a shadowy cope
Of forest trees: flower, foliage, and clear rill
Wave from the cliffs, or down ravines elope;
It seems a place charmed from the power of ill
By sainted words of old:—so lovely, lone, and still.

"And many are the pilgrim feet which tread
Its rocky steeps; which thither yearly go:
Yet less by love of Nature's wonders led,
Than by the memory of a mighty woe,
Which smote, like blasting thunder, long ago,
The peopled hills. There stands a sacred tomb.
Where tears have rained, nor yet shall cease to flow;
Recording days of death's sublimest gloom;
Mompesson's power and pain,—his beauteous Catherine's doom."

THE HOWITTS.

LET me here weep out the fulness of my heart! I have just returned from the mountain village of Eyam. Some writer—why I know not—has styled this ancient village the Queen of the Peak. If it be so, alas, she is indeed a widowed one! for there she stands, alone among the hills, the solemn monument of "a

MIGHTY WOE" that still tingles appallingly in the ear of history, and imbues the whole district with a spirit of pensive gloom. But it is not minutely that I would now trace the story of that event. William Wood has done so in his copious History. Yet let me slightly try to paint its effects on the soul of the time and the cheek of the landscape—though my etching be but of the rudest.

There are few readers of British topography unaware that the Great Plague of 1665—6, found its way, through some subtle agent, from London to Eyam, where, out of a population of 330, it swept away 250 in seven months; while owing to an unfaltering and heroic principle of self-possession, which kept the people within a specific boundary, it was prevented from reaching even the approximate villages. So fearful and sudden, however, was its effect on its victims, that many of them were buried immediately on or near the spot where they died, till almost every knoll and dell in the parish became a place of graves.

Was it not sad to feel Death come into the house, and lay his chilly touch upon heart after heart, till a whole family had to be carried out by the hands of the fear-stricken, and silently buried in some adjoining field or paddock—the very scene of their wonted sports or musings? Was it not awful to see friends and neighbours avoid each other in the street as warily as if they were frightful spectres, lest contamination should attend their briefest intercourse? And when, on the sabbath, instead of wending to church as they were wont, to the cadence of a melodious chime, they scattered them-

selves in stealthiness and awe through the wild and solemn dell of the village stream, to listen there the words of exhortation and comfort, and prayer, was it not doubly appalling to see them pass away again to their cheerless homes, leaving some who had come to participate in their common object cold on the green turf, to be interred on the very spot where life had left them, with scarcely a friend to linger by and drop a tear on their clay—with nothing to murmur their requiem but the passing brook, and nothing to respond save the moaning blast? Ah, yes! There in that loveliest, wildest, but thence evermore most melancholy of Nature's haunts—the Dell, where the fairest trees wave their graceful foliage over the wildest rocks and grots; where bloom the brightest flowers of spring, and sing its tenderest and sweetest birds; where the sky spreads above its serenest canopy, and the sward grows freshest and greenest beneath, would the young devoted village pastor take his stand, under a natural arch of rock, in the affecting hour of humility and prayer, and then would be seen—

"A pallid, ghost-like, melancholy crew,
Seated on scattered crags, and far-off knolls,
As fearing each the other. They were few.
As men whom one brief hour will from the rolls
Of life cut off, and toiling for their souls'
Welcome into eternity—they seemed
Lost in the heart's last conflict, which controls
All outward life—they sate as men who dreamed;
No motion in their frames—no eye perception beamed.

"But suddenly, a wild and piercing cry
Arose amongst them; and an ancient man,
Furious in mood—red frenzy in his eye,
Sprang forth, and shouting, towards the hollow ran.

His white locks floated round his features wan;
He rushed impatient to the valley rill;
To drink, to revel in the wave began,
As one on fire with thirst: then, with a shrill
Laugh, as of joy, he sank—he lay—and all was still.

"Then from their places solemnly two more
Went forth, as if to lend the sufferer aid;
But in their hands, in readiness, they bore
The charnel tools, the mattock and the spade.
They broke the turf—they dug—they calmly laid
The old man in his grave; and o'er him threw
The earth, by prayer nor requiem delayed;
Then turned, and with no lingering adieu,
Swifter than they approached, from the strange scene withdrew!"

Twice have I visited this place of mourning; and the increased depth and tenderness of my feelings on the second occasion convince me that however familiar I might become with its features—however bright on future visits might be the aspect and character of the scenery and the weather—the memory of the "mighty woe" would still give its pensive tinge to almost every thought, and make my eye involuntarily bear witness to the warm gushings of the soul.

My first visit was on a sweet sabbath day, in one of the early months of spring. Some friends were with me; and the last psalm of the afternoon service was just swelling in the holy calm, as we wandered at leisure in the old church-yard—the solemn sound harmonising well with the tone of our feelings and the time.

A cemetery more indicative of local history and character than this, it would be difficult to find perhaps in the whole of England; and I never read a more interesting chapter of village biography than here. There was

the curious old cross, brought, it is said, from the hills, and planted at the end of Catherine Mompesson's tomb —the latter suggestive of many of the most touching reminiscences of the plague; and the "short and simple annals of the poor" were inscribed in expressive language on many a rustic stone around. There was also the grey pile of the church itself—one of the most ancient christian temples among these romantic hills, and in which some of the nobler and better members of our English hierarchy devoted their hearts and voices to God in a bygone day. And then, surrounding all the rest, were the tall, shady linden trees, planted by the venerable father of Anna Seward, and which still add much to the beauty and solemnity of the place, notwithstanding the lopping down of half their original number some years ago—an event which many of the villagers still speak of with extreme regret.

I have called this church-yard an interesting chapter of village biography: let me quote one of its passages as an apt illustration. It is from an upright stone on the northern side, and furnishes a sufficient theme for a whole evening's musing:—

LIBRARIES

George Benson
In the Dale
Interred here
May 17th, 1783. Aged 50 Years.
Mary his Daughter
September 18th, 1779. Aged 3 Years.
Elizabeth his Daughter
September 27th 1779. Aged 1 Year.
Martha his Daughter
September 30th 1779. Aged 3 Years.

How simple, and how much in keeping with the spirit

and manners of the locality, is the good man's distinction from all others of his name! "George Benson in the Dale, interred here," and that so soon after his three darlings—two of them apparently twins—had all died within a few days of each other! What a simple but touching history of a father's affections! He had lived on for three years brooding over the loss of his prattling little ones; and when the spring of the fourth year brought its flowers and songs to "the Dale," he could bear the unhappy remembrance no longer, so was taken and laid with them at rest in the green churchyard. Peace to the gentle memory of "George Benson in the Dale!"

One writer has described Eyam as a peculiarly cheerful village,—yet cheerfulness is never the feeling it inspires in me,—but rather that of tender melancholy. Cheerful hearts—God bless them!—I know there are in it; and not a scarcity of intelligent heads to boot. But when at the turn of every corner some sad memorial of the plague is pointed out—when large old houses stand in almost every part of the village unoccupied, and you cannot pass even some of its sunny, outlying farmsteads, without seeing grave-stones at their very thresholds, or some other object to remind you of the ravages of the fell pestilence—from what can its peculiar cheerfulness spring? Perhaps those who so designate it may have been there only at "the wakes," and may have drawn their conclusions from the household jollity so characteristic of the inhabitants of the Peak, and in which the Eyamites apparently are not a whit outdone by their neighbours.

My last visit chanced to be about the middle of the "wakes week;" and while passing along the street, the pipe and fiddle would occasionally greet my ear with their merry notes from one of the little inns with which the village abounds: and a game at cricket was coming off in a neighbouring field, around which many of the inhabitants had gathered as spectators. With these exceptions, however, and that of a few little stalls for the sale of knicknacks and sweetmeats, on which groups of chubby children were casting their longing looks, there were no external signs of a carnival exhibited; so, quitting the village one fine breezy evening, a gradual ascent of somewhat less than a mile brought me to "Riley Gravestones," in a rich field of after-math, sloping down from a wild remnant of the moors, to which some green growing larches and pines, with glimpses of blooming furze and heather among them, formed altogether a somewhat dusky but beautiful crest.

Riley Grave-stones are enclosed in a rustic cemetery, the outline of which presents the form of a heart. It is an open spot on the bosom of the country where was buried a family of the name of Hancock, who with the exception of one member—a boy, who afterwards introduced the business of silver-plating into Sheffield—all died of the plague, in a residence near by, which has since been demolished. Seven mossy stones—one tabular, the rest upright—with the names and ages of the victims inscribed upon them, denote the precise spot where each was laid.

These monuments are now half obscured by long, rank weeds and grass, and bring forcibly to mind

some of the wildest and tenderest passages in the poems of Ossian. I lingered there long that the spirit and power of the scene might fall upon me—nor did I wait altogether in vain.

The prospect was bounded by a semicircular horizon, extending from the neighbourhood of Buxton, round by Matlock Bath and Wirksworth, and vanishing off in the east over Brampton Moor—enclosing in its ample sweep, and within view, pine-capped Masson, rock-browed Corbar, Chatsworth, Stoke, Calver, and Middleton, with many of their developments of romantic scenery. Before me were hundreds of green fields, sloping beautifully down from Longstone Edge to Middleton Dale, which was folded up almost out of sight in the pastoral country beneath me; and, from the hidden lime-kilns there, arose light films of smoke, like moving wreaths of evening mist. On the other hand lay Eyam village, with its old grey tower and rustic roofs reposing among the trees—about which, to the eye of fancy, hovered sweet poetical associations, the bodiless realities of memory's dreams: it seemed almost as if the venerated names of all the worthies who had made it their home or their theme, were written above, on its lovely sky. Then, dispersed abroad, were those lonely objects that, however common-place in themselves, add much to the character of a picturesque landscape. In one place a tall windmill was slowly flinging round its long dark sails in the air, as constantly as if it were set to count the strides of Time; in another stood some solitary cottage of the lea, its windows flashing back the bright rays of the descend-

ing sun. Here, at hand, was a substantial farm-house, around which stood garners, and ricks, and tall sheltering trees, and flocks and herds about its gate. There, afar off, diminished by the distance to a little cluster, was a mountain hamlet, bleak, hoary, and cold, as though it had never known the luxury of a summer smile. Up, far to the right, ran a dusky clough into the quiet bosom of some verdant upland, that still farther off bore on its brow a plume of waving pines, or was beautifully capped by a beam-tinged cloud that had wandered about the sky all day, and was hovering there preparatory to its evening repose; and equally far, adown the left, stood stately Chatsworth among its sombre woods, like the palace of a great king in some shadowy land of romance. Anon sank the sun behind a western cloud, between which and one still lower there was a dazzling opening, and through it streamed the light, silent and swift over the grassy hills, giving a momentary brilliancy to every object in turn, and then again leaving all things more dim and indistinct than before. It was just what Ossian was thinking of when he said, "As flies the inconstant sun over Larmon's grassy plain, so pass the tales of old along my soul by night!" I shall never forget the grand effect of this phenomenon when, after flying first over one mountain ridge and then another, and another, it passed over the luxuriant valley of the Derwent with the silence and vividness of thought, lighting up Chatsworth House for a moment with its magical illumination—then vanishing away over the far, far horizon.

Yet beautifully wild as was this vast scene, I could

only gaze upon it in reference to the pensive spot where I stood, and which for the time was blended up with my consciousness of all other things. The stones all grey with the moss of years, mingled with a mass of dry vegetation, amongst which the wind rustled with a withering voice; the tootling robin perched on the crumbly wall, and sounding melancholiously the knell of departing summer; the conversation of two native bards (Furness and Wood) who had accompanied me, and who were reminding each other of the old gloomy traditions of the neighbourhood, and pointing out the locality of its different monuments; the long sloping streaks, from behind the clouds, of the golden hues of a Derbyshire sunset; and the gathering shadows of twilight on the eastern moorlands—together with the solemn tolling of a distant bell; all tended to baptize my spirit as in a deep lake of peaceful sadness, and to inscribe more emphatically than ever on my heart, the awful memory of the "MIGHTY WOE."

Chapter Twenty-Ninth.

CLIMBING "SIR WILLIAM."

IT is early morning, and we are at Grindleford Bridge. How is everything flushed with life and beauty! See how the dew has freshened the green of the hills, and how the breeze makes the woods wave their locks as for joy! The tops of the crags on Froggatt Edge glow more richly than when lit with Druidical fires; while the smoke curling up from many a cottage hearth near by, forms an acceptable offering to the Spirit that presides over the domestic altar; and the river laughs loud, as it runs with a flashing eye of delight its winding course through the awakened valley. What a change has been wrought by a few hours in every feature of the neighbourhood!

I sauntered down, and stood alone on the Bridge, last night. How different a scene surrounded me then! The moon came muffled like a spectre from the rocks on Corbar; and there it walked silent through the clouds, over the centre of the vale, as if lost to heaven yet belonging not to earth. The river came darkly out

of the gloom of hanging boughs above the bridge: and after passing through the arches with a sullen boom, went lapsing and weltering away among the trees down the dim-lit meadows. Its current had been swollen by mountain-storms which had now subsided; and in the awfulness of that night-calm I had a vision of its whole course; and the dusky forms of all the rocks and hills and woods along its banks assembled their shades in my imagination, and filled my heart with a romantic melancholy. But now comes the morn—

> "The bright-eyed morn! down from the skies she comes,
> Once more to wake the voices of the woods,
> And breathe a freshening gladness o'er the world!
> Upon the mighty hills she steppeth first,
> And rouseth up the dwellers of the steep,
> But nowhere may she linger long:—with wings
> Of light that pale the far retiring moon,
> And lonely star that heralds her approach,
> She hastens on her way. And now her eye
> Has caught the valleys and the plains below;
> And down she comes o'er chasms yawning wide,
> O'er rocks that seem o'erlaid with liquid gold,
> O'er cataracts and torrents loud and fierce
> That flash and sparkle in her sunny smiles—
> She comes, she comes, the laughing morn! and now
> She dances o'er the meadows and green lawns;
> And every dew-drop brightens in her gaze;
> And all the forest-birds pipe in her train—
> All join harmonious in one happy strain—
> A very flood of music wild and free!"

So, of some sweet scene, as sweetly sang Maudslay, the Barnsley shoemaker, and so as truthfully might he sing of this. It was just such a morning when, with two companions from Sheffield, (now both dead,) I last ascended this fine, bold hill. The sun was up and

shining beautifully, and there was a rich glowing green on the upland slopes which I have seldom seen matched in any other landscape—unless it were that around Cratloe, in Ireland. A blithe little troop of bilberry gatherers were starting at the same time, and adding to the general joy by their innocent glee; while, as if spring had agreed to remain with summer, two thrushes sang gaily in a way-side plantation, and Echo told their sweet notes o'er again on the opposite side of the valley, from the depths of which swelled up the river's voice, and mingled all sounds together with its own in one wild yet most harmonious hymn.

The whole ascent by the road I take to be considerably more than two miles; and at every fifteen or twenty yards, during the first mile, the form and character of the landscape is varied to the eye with exquisite effect, a peculiarity that won from us many a lingering look on scenes which would make the faintest traveller lose, for the time, all sense of fatigue. As one portion of the winding valley below, with its wood-embosomed hamlets, and farms, and cottages, and river-gleams, vanished out of sight, others gradually and gracefully *stole* on the delighted sense, and others again *broke* upon it with a startling influence—ever changing, ever fair—till with a slight effort of the fancy the whole might be deemed a moving panorama.

From the commencement of the second mile, however, the character of the scenery became entirely changed, and we seemed as though we had entered another sphere of existence. No more river-glimpses among the low-bowed foliage!—no more sunny halls,

and hamlets, and garden-surrounded cots, with the blue reek curling up out of their stunted chimneys, and pigeons and swallows winging happily about them!—no more joyous rural sounds from the road, and river, and fields, and fold-yards!—but hill above hill, rock upon rock, and moor beyond moor,—with lines of lonely road striking about them in various directions, that here vanished among the heather like rivers losing their courses, and there seemed to run through the horizon into unknown lands,—and all swelling, or towering, or expanding around us together, wider and wider as higher we arose, till everything was merged into one vast, dusky, solemn, yet exciting scene, indescribable by pen or pencil!

"The moors—all hail! Ye changeless, ye sublime,
That seldom hear a voice, save that of Heaven!
Scorners of chance, and fate, and death, and time,
But not of Him whose viewless hand hath riven
The chasm through which the mountain stream is driven!
How like a prostrate giant—not in sleep,
But listening to his beating heart—ye lie!
With winds and clouds dread harmony ye keep;
Ye are alone beneath the boundless sky;
Ye speak, are mute—and there is no reply!
* * * * a sable sea
Of hills like chaos, ere the first command,
'Let there be light!' bade light and beauty be."

EBENEZER ELLIOTT.

And as we now descend from such a region of heather and cloud, and again catch pleasant glimpses of road and hamlet, rock, river, and distant spire,—and all the other pleasant scenes that gladdened us at starting,—do you not feel thankful for the goodness, and beauty, and grandeur of all the works of God, and the power

He has given us to study and to love them? For the arts and comforts of social life; the sunshine of heaven and the fruitage of the earth; the stars of night and the flowers of day; the shower and the rainbow; the green grass and the golden grain; and especially for the woods and waters and mountains—with all the sublime emotions they enkindle, and the sense of universal harmony and of the Creator's power and glory they awaken? Oft among those solemn and hoary haunts of ten centuries—the oaken groves of my native forest—has a shadow of the grandeur and beauty of His universal temple alighted on my soul, like the fall of a seer's mantle, with inspiration in its folds;—but while it there bowed me down in reverence, it did not lift me up again in hope, like the Genius of the Peak, whose home is on the mountains, in the light of setting and rising suns; whose walks are among the valleys, in the music of bright waters; and in whose dominion we can stand and behold the woods themselves wave beneath us like seas of verdure, instead of being lost in their overshadowing gloom. O! how good it is thus to stand in some lofty place, and feel the world in its beauty spread out below, with nothing around us but etherial purity, and nothing above but Infinite Love! Marvel not that Jesus went up into a mountain to pray! but rather, with Maudslay, let us feel that—

> "It is the high prerogative of mind
> To reap and garner up the beautiful
> And grand that visible creation holds.
> This forms its proper life; for this has God
> Embodied his ideas, and strewn the earth
> And wide-spread heavens with their images;
> For this has He so formed our purer life,

That it is moulded to the shape, and wears
The colour of the beauty it imbibes.
Search then through nature, O my soul! and store
Thyself with beauty; yea, let thou the light
Of setting suns, and all the soft romance
And mellowed loveliness with which the moon
Invests the sleeping world—let the bright flowers
That love the wilderness, and all fair forms
That charm the wakeful sense, within thee live;
For in that life of inward beauty lies
Thine exaltation. Let thou the sublime,
The vast in nature cry aloud to thee,
Informing thee of grandeur and of power
Exalted high above thine utmost ken,
Invisibly diffused, and over all
Enthroned, that thou mayest learn humility.
Familiar grow with all created things
That evidence the hallow'd truthfulness
And wisdom of the over-ruling Mind,
That thou mayest learn to place in God alone
Thy faith and every hope; and let the song
Of the eternal goodness sound in thee!"

Chapter Thirtieth.

A DAY AT LEAM HALL.

THERE is a class of rural seats scattered over the face of Old England, which a single shade of antiquity will render more attractive than at present, in consequence of the revival of a semi-gothic taste that is now altogether superseding their style, and causing them to stand the distinctive landmarks of a particular age. The pleasant residences to which I here refer, are those bespeaking their erection to have been in that era of taste, the coming of which was indicated, if not accelerated, by a school of writers from whom we may select Mason, the author of the "English Garden," as a favourable example. Their predominating features are neatness and comfort; yet allied with these we often observe about them an inviting air of gracefulness, and occasionally even of dignity. They are evidently the fruit of an age well satisfied with itself, when fortunes were not so suddenly made and lost as at present, and when those who built mansions did not consider mere bulkiness, or antiquity of style, a necessary help to local importance. Free, in short, from the

massiveness and strength of an earlier age, and on the other hand from the more recently prevailing signs of a speculative and fanciful spirit, they are stamped with a character of leisurely contentment, which expresses their patrician claim, without that antique bearing with which the circumstances of the times invested the mansions of old, and of which the Sir Walter Scottish school of literature has induced an eager imitation in these latter days.

These houses, generally speaking, are of a more commanding character on the plains than in mountainous districts, and for this several cogent reasons might be given. Here is one. Where the scenery around is comparatively flat, and the various features of Nature more diminutive, any work of art is sure to wear a bolder appearance than where the landscape itself is strikingly picturesque. In a country distinguished by the boldness of its outlines, and by the wildness, sublimity, and diversity of its features, the habitation of man, be it hall or cot, has a quiet, lowly, lovely, nest-like appearance about it, unknown in scenes of a reverse description, and looks as though the green hills had spread open their bosoms to receive it among them for shelter and repose, rather than, as in the other case, the house had been built to overawe the objects of nature.

At one such pleasant little mountain seat, I once passed a very happy day, in compliance with a polite invitation from its then proprietor—the late Marmaduke Middleton Middleton, Esq. It is a pastoral spot on a verdant lea—about half-way between Hathersage and

Stoney Middleton, on the breast of "Sir William," overlooking a great portion of the fair valley of the Derwent, and is called Leam Hall.

Of its name of Leam I do not, to a certainty, know the derivation; but am inclined to suppose it an abbreviation of the Saxon *Lea-ham*—viz., the Ham or Home, on the Lea—a very appropriate name, considering its situation. The principal approach to it is by a serpentine drive, commencing within a mile of Grindleford Bridge. This drive, including all its windings, is three quarters of a mile long, and has something about it peculiarly enticing to the tourist. Mr. Middleton told me that a strange gentleman, of good appearance, was once observed gazing about him near the front of the house, when some one went out to learn his pleasure. "Really," said he, "this will to you seem very singular: but as I was walking along the road admiring the beauties of the neighbourhood, I happened to step a few yards within your enchanting drive, when unconciously giving way to its progressive interest, I passed on from one turn to another, till here I am! You must excuse me; for this, I assure you, is the only account I can give of my obtrusion." It is needless to say the stranger was politely and hospitably treated, and that he went away delighted with his adventure. My own visit was in 1841, and the following description was written about that time:—

For about two-thirds of the way, on the left of the winding drive, there rises a wild shrubby and flowery bank, sometimes sloping, at others precipitous. From one place strikes up a bowery path, across some

old-fashioned rustic stile into the climbing woods; in another, the road winds round a green jutting rock, from which the varied foliage waves over us, shadowy and cool; while all along the right runs a low beechen hedge, a sort of natural parapet, over which we gaze down into the deep curving valley of the Derwent, that runs cheerily on, now gleaming in the open sunshine, and now hiding itself again in the overhanging woods, its voice subsiding on its disappearance into a long, low, peaceful whisper.

Of the many beautiful trees that stud the romantic slope, over this beechen parapet, is one which, from its grace and lightness, will long wave among the pleasant places of my memory in the light of sunny thoughts;—it is a full-grown, but delicate spiral larch, with such long, green, wavy tassels as I have scarcely ever seen appended to another, though myriads have passed under my observation. Did you ever study the texture and beauty of the larch, as it occasionally shoots up—sometimes singly—from among the low leafy bushes? Were I a country gentleman, there would be few pastimes in which I should indulge with a keener relish than that of watching and studying the growth of my woods. It is a right noble as well as a right profitable pastime! But let us proceed.

It was a lovely morning in early September; and the sky and the country were rivalling each other in good looks. An intelligent guide had been appointed to my service; and as we started across the lawn, on a rural exploration, I gave a day's peremptory discharge to Care, determined to enjoy as I ought the richness and

grandeur of those landscapes. And a lovely prospect we had to begin with! All from Stanedge down to Corbar rocks, swept mile after mile of varied country before me, adorned with crisped woods and scattered remnants of browning moor, and fields all golden with ripened grain, or green with fresh reviving eddish—now spreading away round some white cotted hamlet—now again seeming to gather about some snug retiring farm —Hathersage spire, in one direction, looking as if it had withdrawn into the bushy recesses of Brookfield Dale; and the bright river flashing far away in the other, along the plain towards Chatsworth, like a spirit of light leaping for joy in the fields of Elysium.

Taking a path to the right, we reached and rested in a little shed, commanding a view around from north to south, with the rocks on Froggatt directly in front, and the vale spread out in its full luxuriance between, into which, from our side, descended a wild woody clough; while the crimson raspberry-flower and purple heather were blooming refreshingly about our feet. Sweet indeed was the repose of this spot, the only voices heard being those of the far-off river and the whispering trees around us, unless it were now and then the call of a jay to its fluskering mate, or the bell-like note of some smaller bird, or perhaps the bustling of a solitary bee in the cone of a wild-flower; whilst cloud chased cloud over the outspread scene, in such silent, constant, beautiful succession, with such regular gleams of sunshine between, that it made the green meadows beneath us wave almost like a sea of liquid emerald.

Then came a wild winding walk, that brought us on

to the other end of that clough on the side of which we had sat before—here crossed by a rustic wooden bridge, where we lingered and mused on the sweet scene below—to me perhaps the sweetest in all the ramble; though I should by no means be justified in calling it the grandest, because, in reality, it is one of the more limited. But just mark the circumstances under which it was beheld.

There aloft we stood on that old broken bridge, up among the green shadowy bowers of the hill; and the trossachy clough rapidly widened and descended for more than half a mile beneath us, rugged and wild as the forsaken bed of a mountain torrent; but with its stones all greenly mossed and weeded over, as though they had never been washed but by the trickling dews of summer. The verdure of the landscape had just caught its first delicate autumnal tint and curl—that tender yet glowing crispness which we imagine to have kinship with ripe fruits and blushing evenings, and blithe songs of the harvest-field, and youths and maidens just flushing into the fulness of well-placed, modest love. And there we stood on that lonely, lofty bridge, calmly and delightedly o'ergazing it all! Immediately on our right hung a mountain-ash, bent beautifully down by the weight of its own ripe red clusters,

"Whose blushing fruit glow'd through the leafy green."

On our left impended a spreading thorn; and as the sides of the clough opened out to the east and north, they exhibited almost every variety that could grace the woods—beech, larch, oak, ash, fir, and chesnut, being

discerned, mingling almost equally together, as far as the point where distance robbed them of their distinctive lineaments, and there we had a glimpse of the windings of the light sandy drive; while still further below ran the river—heard, not seen—its course traced only by a dusky and tortuous line among the verdure, that gently stirred as if just to show us that it emulated the murmurings of the hidden waters. And then again, over that line, how nobly swelled up the landscape to the horizon's verge! First were the green pastures over-scattered with grazing cattle; then the ripe cornfields, some, as yet, uncut and waving; others where reapers were seen moving blithely about, rearing their shocks in stately rows, around a grey old farmstead, called the Barn-i'th'-Wood; while woods and brackenfields spread away beyond to the curving line of Millstone Edge, over which ascended far into the sky great pillars and folds of smoke, from the firing of a track of moorland ling. Then was seen Longshaw House standing alone in its dusky pride, in the midst of its dim and ancient heaths—the whole hemmed in by the still more dim outline of Stony Ridge, to which, from the hill whereon we stood, was extended over all a sunny sea of ether, about which lay little clouds, like isles of swan-down edged with silver.

Resuming our walk, we arrived at a point marked by an Obelisk, from which opened another prospect stretching far up to the north—so beautiful! so various! so truly rural! First, from our feet descended a mossy and heathery slope, till lost in the heart of a dell, where lightly tinkled a small brook from stone to stone, and

bright-leaved Spanish chesnuts and hoary-green Scotch firs, and birches flinging forth their lithe branches, were all mingled harmoniously together, as the silent beams of the westering day slot down among them, and kindled them into the most beauteous glow; and richly plumaged jays passed from tree to tree on glancing wings; while a solitary hawk poised itself in the sky above, motionless as a mid-ocean ship becalmed. How delightsome then was

> "The side-long view of swelling leafiness,
> Which the glad setting sun in gold doth dress,
> Whence ever and anon some joy outsprings,
> And scales upon the beauty of its wings!"

While beyond, was a fair rising of feathery foliage, and farther still, bright lawny openings, in which we could again perceive the serpentine drive gracefully unwinding itself and passing away out of sight behind luxuriant larch plantations, that looked at such a distance like "large honey-combs of green." Next, and still farther off, was a grand spread of open agricultural country, with its sunny fields of pasture and grain, sprinkled over with smiling hamlets and cottages, flanked on its right by brown old woods and rocks; and bounded afar by a grey moorland ridge, on which immense volumes of cloud were piled in all the grandeur and beauty of distant alps.

After visiting an artificial grotto, and labyrinth of low holly, beech and privet, not unlike the "Shepherd's Race," in Nottinghamshire, and lingering awhile

> "Where hanging woods a thousand shades display,"

we returned to the Hall, took a glance at the gardens,

and then retired within, to join in a grateful repast and conversation which brought the day to a pleasant close. Then, as at length I took leave of my urbane old host, the purple hues of twilight had descended on the surrounding hills; the stars had begun to twinkle in the pure heaven above, and the lights to glimmer in the scattered cottages below; the vespers of the distant river ascended in softly varying cadences, to which the trees around the mansion breathed a responsive whisper; and I bent my solitary way through the fields and woods with many joyous yet tender thoughts. In this brief life there is enough of toil and care and grief; yet there are occasional seasons of happiness for which it is worth our while living and enduring all; and I shall often dwell on the remembrance of a "Day at Leam" with joy, as on that of a green sunny isle of rest, amid the turbid and resistless stream of Time.

Chapter Thirty-First.

LOITERINGS NEAR LONGSHAW.

WALKING up from Grindleford Bridge towards Longshaw, we soon come to a beautiful opening through the woods into the meadows of the Derwent, with a view of Leam and its "pleasaunces" beyond. Into that opening we turn, and are almost startled by the sight of an old mill embosomed in the wood so near the road we have just left, yet entirely hidden from it; and down from its side runs the Burbedge Brook, foaming and curveting from lin to lin, on its way to the river. We pass along a rough road, among wildly strewn blocks of grit, that look as if they had been showered at random from some world above the sky, and presently reach an old farm-house, which, with its cluster of out-buildings, strikes us strangely by its air of *uncommonness*. We see a barn, granary, foddery, and stable, all in one great square fabric; but we feel that it must have been erected for some other purpose,—that its antique doorways were not made merely to be filled up, as we see them now, nor its pointed windows to be used for pitching-holes and

loop-lights for cattle. We go inside, climb about and examine it, and every object we see adds to a persuasion haunting the mind from the first—that at some former day the place was a Catholic chapel. Every projection on which the rafters rest is ornamented with a well carved corble; every architectural feature speaks of ancient religious worship; and at length, to set any possibility of doubt at rest, a *piscina* is found unmutilated in the wall.

Mr. Seth Thorpe, a farmer residing on the spot, once pointed out to me a wide chimney, in which tradition says that in the days of Elizabeth's proscription of the Romanists, several priests were discovered secreting themselves, and were taken to Derby, subject to capital punishment, and that one of them was there beheaded. Another account is, that a priest was taken from the altar while performing mass, and had his hand cut off for the offence. There may possibly be a degree of truth in all these statements, but I have never seen any printed record of them. This place (Padley) is well worth the glance of an archæologist. It belonged formerly to the Eyres of Highlow; and judging by the extent of foundations still traceable, must have been, in its day, a notable seat. The estate is now, I believe, merged in that of the Shuttleworths of Hathersage.

But we now pass away from the back of the chapel, and over some thick ivy-tangled fragments of ancient walls, and pursue a wild route up the wood to Ciceley Tor, by which winds an old disused bridle-road to Sheffield, overgrown with mosses, ferns, brambles, and all kinds of running plants. A strange and lonely, but

most charming place is this—so calm, so silent! It seems as if no one had been on the spot besides ourselves, since the last pack-horse's bell tingled along this path; and how many generations must have vanished since then! It makes one ruminate on the many solitudes and cities continually creating. Think of this spot, that now seems the very core of Solitude's heart, having once been filled with the echoes of voices on their way to the *village* of Sheffield, then consisting of only a few hundred cottages, that seemed to shrink beneath the frown of an old feudal castle, of which hardly a vestige is now left for our contemplation; whilst that village itself has attained the bulk of a mighty city! When musing on these changes at home, we cease to wonder that, in the lapse of centuries, as Thomas Brown says,

"The site of Babylon has twice a desert been!"

There must have been a time—before even Sheffield existed as a village, perhaps before London itself was founded—when crowds assembled about this spot: for it has been the scene of ancient popular gatherings, as witness the Celtic remains around, now half obscured by weeds and soil! There is even a druidical circle just on the outside of the wood, at the distance of a few hundred yards to the north or north-east, of which no historian has taken cognizance, though it is well known to some of the Duke of Rutland's gamekeepers, by one of whom it was first pointed out to me.

Had we time to go to Froggatt Edge, it might be possible to find still more of such relics. It would not

take us more than an hour or two. Froggatt is a little grey hamlet by yon turnpike, and is composed of cottages scarcely larger than many of the stones which seem to have been showered in myriads on every hand around its site; and from that point we clamber up, amid blocks of grit of all forms and dimensions, tumbled in heaps as wild as the wreck of a ruined world. There, under one of the boldest projections of the cliff, or "edge," we find a wide natural cavity, the gloomy character of which may be gathered from its name of the "Boggart Hole," given it by the neighbouring peasants; and from the top, far away to the east, bearing different names in different parts, extend the dusky moors of Longshaw, in an almost uninterrupted plain.

Bordering another part known by the gamekeeper as Stoke Flat, are curious rocks of every imaginable form—some nearly circular, but tapering downwards to a mere pivot; and about a quarter of a mile north of these, some hundred and fifty yards or so within the Edge, is distinctly traceable a druidical circle, twelve yards in diameter, composed of a number of stones set at equal distances, with "the grey stone of power" standing upright within its southern side, still about half a yard in height.

But let us now recal the mind to objects nearer us. Did you ever notice the foliage of a cluster of young oaks, when the morning gleams among them from the east, in summer? Such delicious streaks and flushes of pink among their gold! Come and stand here in this bower, on Cleeley Tor, and look down. See now from that bosomy hollow on our left, how beautifully

mingle those same young oaks with the birches, and what a fine foil is formed for them by the steadier and darker hues of the pines and larches beyond, which seem as though they grew there to soften down by their solemnity the exuberant feelings inspired by their gayer companions of the woods! And look again, far down, to the very bottom, at the meeting of two slopes on the banks of the brook, how the little mill just peeps up among the foliage, and sends up its thin, blue film of smoke into the still, bright heaven!

And now we near once more the wild rivulet which gives so much character to the whole scene, and find ourselves in a region of Swiss huts, rustic bridges, winding walks and drives, with glimpses here and there of the foaming torrent below—sometimes so close that you may count the pebbles at its bottom; sometimes so far beneath as to make you giddy while gazing. We have, in short, entered the more immediate domain of Longshaw, and are sauntering slowly through Yarncliff Woods. How thankful one is, that in the various artificial aids which facilitate our further ramble, everything is in good keeping with surrounding nature. There is nothing at all out of keeping, to offend the sense of loneliness befitting such haunts; and were an eagle to swoop down from yonder dark, projecting cliff—as eagles have been known to do—it would hardly surprise us in so wild a solitude. And yet a few hundred steps have brought us again to the turnpike road, and one step more into the view of Longshaw House itself.

My most recent visit to this unpretending but interesting moorland seat, was in the present autumn of 1852

—two days after the Duke of Rutland and his guests had departed. The day previous, I had journeyed through some of the fairest scenes around Sheffield, and in the time of sunset reached the cottage of my poetical friend Richard Furness, near Dore. A lovely spot in that lovely hour was the poet's home With many a true touch of rural life around; with the woods and hollows of Beauchief and Norton in front, the dim outline of hills outstretching beyond, and the moon coming forth, as the sun retired, to diffuse over all a softer light; while the only sound (save the voice of human kindness) was the music, afar and near, of gentle waters: what was there to prevent the night being happy? And when next morning arose with renewed brightness and joy, it saw me mounted again, on my way through the village of Dore, by winding lanes and over sparkling brooks, towards Totley, and Totley Hall.

Many years before I had seen the latter old-fashioned place; and time had not destroyed the memory of its many gables and chimneys and mullioned windows without, or the sight within of rusty weapons, jack boots, decayed stag's horns, and other relics, including a large leopard-skin thrown for cover over a couch: and fox-skins, loose-laid, in lieu of cushions, on the bottoms of ancient oaken chairs. On this occasion, therefore, instead of lingering in the house, I sought the neighbouring woods, with their three miles of walks and ridings, often winding by the side of a clear little stream, or climbing considerably above it—a sort of Yarncliff Wood in minature, only with softer aspects, as the warm sun-gleams stole into every glade and

open nook, with a sweetness that found its way to the heart and kindled afresh the gentlest hopes and memories of youth. And in those glades, or in a little hermitage, was it that I passed the happy hour, while the owner prepared to accompany me over the adjacent moors to Longshaw, for which we started, on ponies, about the middle of the day.

How I do enjoy a free scamper over the brow of a heathery mountain! At such a time one seems to be lifted up above all the artifices and pettinesses of life, and to scorn all slavishness and meanness of every kind! I would give little for the man who could bound at will over the lofty moorlands, without feeling contempt for everything narrow, cribbed, or crabbed, on returning.

We had soon passed the scattering of cottages at Monybrooks—a hollow so named from the converging there of many little streams—had ascended a "tongue" of the moors called Wimble Holme; and there, facing about, we saw half of Hallamshire, with Scarsdale, and Hardwick, and a great part of Sherwood Forest, all spread out before us,—valley running into valley, wood stretching to wood, and ridge fading beyond ridge, till all became lost on the dim horizon—my companion, who, though seventy-seven years of age, has remarkable scope and accuracy of vision, telling me that when the scene was quiet free from haze, he had, from a point not far off, sometimes distinguished Lincoln Cathedral. That point I suppose, would be where "The Crooked Pole," upon his portion of the moors, marks one of the

most prominent stations of the late Ordnance Survey, and which yet remains a conspicuous object.

How strangely will horses, that would almost come to your hand in a home field, imbibe the spirit of liberty on the open moorlands—contemning restraint, and snorting, pawing and neighing upon any one's approach, as if they disdained ever again to enter a stable,—scorning the creature man, by whom harness and stables are contrived! We had a fine example of this, on starting a small drove, where they were feeding as we rode along, and which, after flashing their eyes and tossing their manes around us for a short time, kicked and bounded away at last, among the brown heather, until they became undistinguishable in the distance.

Where the objects are few, those that might be passed almost without notice in a crowd arrest our attention. Thus it was with that isolated house—nearly a new one, and remarkably enough, the residence of Mr. Moore, the district doctor—which we left at some distance among the ling and fern, to our right, on ascending. And so it is again with yon odd little spot, just a shade more dark than the heath around it, which may now, as we ride along, be seen on our left, between us and the Crooked Pole,—and what can *it* be? Why, just a sort of Shepherd's Hut, or Black Dwarf's Cabin, or anything else your fancy may name it—that is all—but a very agreeable shelter to those who might, in such a wild, bleak region, be caught in a pelting storm: and I am not sure that the Duke of Rutland himself has not had some experience of the fact. But now rises on

the eye something that could not fail to catch our observation anywhere,—you building, like a Scotch fortalice, breaking the sky, far away over "the Moss,"—and commanding the entire range of the moors,—one of the most complete keeper's lodges perhaps you ever saw. The "Moss," now spreading on our left, belongs to Lord Middleton—the "Moor" we are on, to Mr. Coke; and the Duke of Rutland owns chief of the rest, extending to the horizon's bend, where the Duke of Devonshire commencing in one direction, and the Duke of Norfolk, and other great proprietors, in another, command tracts that extend to further horizons—making altogether one of Nature's widest and wildest moorland realms.

And hence, too, we see, rising again before us, Longshaw and Fox House, and the dark rocks of Caelswark, Higgar, and Owler, beyond, with all their wondrous associations! You will remember that in a previous chapter, for reasons (real or supposed) there given, I have called Higgar *Hu-Gaer*; and now my hale and intelligent companion who, though in his early days no unworthy schoolmate of Southey and other men of imagination, eschews everything far-fetched, if a more familiar solution will serve—is discussing with me the etymology of the name. It is obvious to him, he says, that *Higgar* is but another pronunciation of *Higher*; and that *Owler*, is only another word for Lower; and, as we ride on, he points to their relative altitudes in proof, attributing the cromlech-like shapes of some of the huge stones to the long action of water and the weather. How like an outspread umbrella of gigantic

dimensions yon dusky tor on Owler! How like a Titan's horse and chariot the pile that breaks the drooping clouds on Higgar—as seen at this distance! And into what strange huge masses the mists around are wreathing and folding themselves, as if to give a still more fantastic interest to the scene! Let us leave the abstract question to the archæologist and philologist, and pass on our way for the present, content with the mighty though silent and mysterious spectacle! I do not want to be superstitious, but, somehow, I can never avoid associating such scenes with MIND and PURPOSE.

Well! Longshaw House is reached at last: and what do we find it? Had it been a stately Belvoir, it were treason against the grand old reign of Nature around, by marring, if not destroying, the *wildness* of the landscape. Nay, even picturesque Haddon had not been so well here as where it is, among the bowery trees by the beaming Wye. A "lodge" in the "vast wilderness"—just a snug and simple "lodge," becoming its use and position, was wanted—and we have it. Can it be that three days ago the descendant of the ancient "kings of the Peak," with England's prime minister, and numerous lords and ladies fair, besides, occupied this unostentatious retreat—as neat, compact, and *comfortable*, as a Quaker's country villa—and now as *still!* Why, on comparing it with some of his palaces, you could almost think that his Grace might have had it all packed up and taken away with his plate:—and in truth, some dukes have done things little less remarkable in that way! But here it is left for another year; and,

after all, there is not wanting enough about it to bespeak its *true character*. Just as one of the olden Wortleys built a lone lodge on Wharncliffe, "whereunto he might resort to hear the wild bucks bell;" so is Longshaw—dark from the stone of which it is built—suited to the whir and cry of the wild moorland fowl.

But let us enter; and everything inside is in keeping with everything out: there is nothing superfluous, though much of the neatest and best. In the hall are well preserved mementos of the ornithology of the neighbourhood—including eagles and other birds now very rare. In the drawing room is little ornament;—stay—was it there we saw that curious and smile provoking pictorial screen? Something there is about which memory never can be uncertain—namely, that two pictures only occupy its walls—one, a large engraving of the late beautiful and excellent Duchess, copies of which are treasured with so much regard in many mansions—the other a portrait of our accompanying friend. We glance through the window upon a fountain in full play; and then pass to the dining-room, where a few good mountain landscapes and one marine picture, as works of art—and a view from the window of the proximate moors and rocks, as the work of nature—are what chiefly strike us—and the effect is pleasing. Ascending to the bed-rooms, two of them are found to be large and elegant—all of them are light and cheerful—and into a third we step with some emotion. Though by far the smallest of the three, and quite plain, it is that which was wont to be occupied by the late Sir Robert Peel, on his annual visit, and

is now preferred by the Duke himself. It has the advantage of commanding a fine west view of the moors. The rest of the bed-rooms are in similar taste, with little or no ornament, unless that title can be given to the purest cleanliness.

At length we descend, and have a glance at the gardens and the stables, and a stroll through the grounds—taking, in our way, the head of a large pond, which we saw gleaming a little while before; and the only possible comment on all which is, that they are convenient to the house and very appropriate to it—or will be, when time has finished its fast-progressing work of assimilation. We now take an hour among the scenes before described in Yarncliff Woods, in which ten years have made but little change, and then rest ourselves for another hour in the large parlour of Fox House Inn, said to be one of the most complete rooms, of its kind, in all England. But evening comes on apace; so we mount again, and are ambling back over another region of the moors towards Owler Bar, whence my friend and his attendant pass on, and I turn down, by Horsley Gate and Milnthorpe, through twilight dells and winding lanes, once more towards the plain, thankful for "the poet's share" in woodland, field, and mountain.

Chapter Thirty-Second.

THE WYE AND DOVE.

THOUGH ten years have passed since I last lingered, with two friends, among the scenes at which we have now to glance; in the truthful words of W. H. Wylie, "time mellows memories, and if the pictures presented to our view lose a little in exactness, they lose nothing in beauty and feeling, by the lapse of time and the influence of the imagination." Or take the language of Keats, who says—

> "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
> Its loveliness increases."

And this one feels intensely while thinking of the district lying between the Wye and Dove, including the main and several tributary valleys of those streams —a district in which, truly, the charms of all the rest of the Peak run wild—and which no person of taste ought to ramble abroad, or settle down at home, without first exploring. For me there is no pastime more sweet than that of tracing a river up to its source among the hills, or down to its estuary in the plain or

the sea. I have done this with several of the most classical and beautiful streams in the British Isles. But none, considering the space they run, abound more in the charms of Nature's own romance than the Derbyshire Wye and Dove, and their little tributaries.

They are both the children of one mountain, Axe Edge, near Buxton; and you may form acquaintance with the Wye before it sees the light, by penetrating that interesting cavern, Poole's Hole, as I have several times done. It is a wondrous place, and worthy of a far more dignified name; a sort of crypt in Nature's vast cathedral; an assemblage of all grotesque, fantastic and beautiful mineral formations, in a fretted vault not made by man, yet mimicking or prototyping all his art. And there it is that you may enter and listen to the earliest droppings and murmurings of the Wye, before it steals into the sunshine at the green hill-foot, to wind its way through field and grove, by Buxton town, and into the wild gorges and arcadian dales succeeding each other beyond. Sometimes hurrying through a hidden gully: now lingering and forming an open pool, next curvetting over some little wear or other obstruction; anon receiving the tribute of a bright cascade;—down it rushes at length into Chee Dale, leaving Topley Pike and many another peak and crag far above and behind it, till its waters, after turning the wheel of a lone little mill, and reposing in a deep place called the Dropping Leuch—wash the feet of Chee Tor, a plain mass of limestone rising 300 feet, and opposed by other rocks as variegated and beautiful as *it* is pon[illegible] and sublime.

Threading Miller's Dale—a stream of light through a poet's paradise—it afterwards swells, deepens, and then sleeps for a short time, between the steeps that sustain or embosom the mansion and mills of Cressbrook and Wye Dale, (where the M'Connels and Newtons have united the delights of retirement with the pursuits of industry,) and then glides on through Monsal Dale.

What language can paint the loveliness of Monsal Dale? The rustic homes—the widening shallows—the cottage girl on the stepping-stones—the group of cattle in the "ribble-bibbling" water—the flitting halcyon—the wheeling and dipping swallows—yon angler at the river's bend—the curves and juttings of the wooded and pastoral hills—and the sunny sky overspreading all! Was it not some such scene as this that touched the heart of Douglas, when he cried—

> "O God! methinks it were a happy thing
> To be no better than a simple swain!"

Truly, one would wish the simple swains who dwell near such a spot no greater enjoyment than to know their privilege; and some of them, I think, do know it. At all events, if the rustics do not, the cotton-spinners do: for when the mills have been stopped, on a summer Saturday evening, I have seen small groups of them loitering very happily down here; and, after lingering awhile, have myself sauntered on, enjoying the scenery still more for their happiness.

And now, just where the turnpike-road comes out of the romantic pass of Taddington Dale—a pass rivalling in picturesqueness many far more famed abroad—the Wye, "blue and arrowy," hastens out into the fresh

green vale of Ashford. Soon Ashford Hall and its lakelet, the ivied and time-touched mansion of "The Rookery," and many another delightful villa and cottage is seen; and the Wye winding below—the wooded hills towering beyond, with here and there the abrasure of a rock, yonder the indenture of a clough, to vary the prospect, who could not enjoy—as did the gentle authoress of "Vignettes of Derbyshire"—a residence at Ashford-in-the-Water?

Then Ashford village and its marble-works are passed; and on flows the Wye, transparent as ever, through still expanding scenery, to Bakewell—bonny Bakewell! in the garden of the Peak; with its ancient church renewed; its capital hotel (the Rutland Arms) and many a comfortable looking inn besides; its clean, stone-fronted streets, with excellent shops at intervals; its many-arched bridge, and its slopes of green country, studded with elegant residences, all around; and—more than all—this little river, winding along the plain, with the calm glow of sunshine, but with the freshness of a fountain and the force of a torrent; while the woods of Stanton above, and Haddon Hall below, watch its course with pride, as it sweeps round the meadows with a last curve more graceful than all before, to welcome the Lathkil, then pay its devoirs to the Derwent at Rowsley.

Did I speak of the Lathkil? Not in the wildest, loneliest parts of Scotland or Wales is there a more quiet little glen, or a purer trout-stream, than the romantic and for the most part solitary Lathkil which also receives the Bradford, from other picturesque and

ancient scenes about Middleton-by-Youlgreave, ere it joins the Wye. But as we shall have to come upon these waters in another chapter, we will now return and track the course of the Dove.

What Birkland is to the Forest, Dovedale is to the Peak: but ere we descend into its wild and solemn depths, let us climb the mountain-parent of its waters, Axe-Edge—the highest hill, except Kinderscout, in all Derbyshire—and gaze on the Alpine realm over which it reigns. Black, blue, grey, green, and golden—blending and melting in the vast space around us—give to the universal display of curves and cones and pointed peaks, as seen hence, a charm for which language has no definition. From Bardon Hill on the south-east, to the Irish Sea on the north-west, what outlines of rock and river, moorland and mountain—here swelling high, yonder sinking low—sometimes bold and harsh and bleak—sometimes soft and fair,—fading into the faintest strokes and touches of Nature's pencil!

Hence, too, from beneath us, flow four rivers, into different regions—the Dane, finding its way westwards, through many a wild moss, deep glen, and pastoral dale, and under the dark brow of Cloud End, in Cheshire, to the Mersey. The Goyt, towards Lyme Hall, and beyond Whaley Bridge, to the north. The Wye, as we have already seen, through Buxton—town of the Cresent and the Bath—and tending ever a little towards the east. While the Dove, rilling forth, and gathering strength in its hasty descent from lin to lin, strikes a path through the riven hills to the plains of

the mid-day sun. Let us now go down and accompany it on its romantic course.

How perfect the peace of yon pastures, spreading so wide away on the Staffordshire side! The very grass seems to grow as if careful of disturbing the repose of that perpetual sabbath! And now we are under the shadow of Pikeous Hill—so named from its shape, though of late corrupted into Parker's Hill—and now in that of the still bulkier Croom—with the Weaver range striking up and stretching along the distant sky. And still grows the Dove from rill to rivulet, and from rivulet to river, as it meanders on through a country of large dairy farms to Hartington. And what a pleasant little town is Hartington! Ancient but not dreary; quiet, yet not uncheerful; primitive, yet not retrogressive;—art thou the capital of a pastoral little land of content; or is thy rural felicity but a seeming? I will not dissolve the charm by inquiring too closely; yet

> "Methinks, if there's peace to be found in the world,
> The heart that is humble might hope for it here."

And here—nearing Beresford—is Walton and Cotton's fishing-house still remaining, amid the shade of a group of firs, where the names of the two anglers, twined in one cypher, attest their friendship from age to age; while on flows the river into Pike Pool—so called from a natural obelisk rising out of its waters, and which no one has better described than John Edwards, in "The Tour of the Dove:"—

> "But who can paint the beauties of Pike Pool?
> Thy Duddon, Wordsworth, in its splendid route

Has nought so soft and green, so shadowy cool.
'Tis haunted by the grayling and the trout;
And from the sleeping water rising out—
Fairer than workmanship of elfin hands—
Appears an obelisk, a rocky sprout;
Like those of coral seen on Indian strands;
Or shapely pile that sole in some deep valley stands.

"Shrubs and steep crags a crescent screen have drawn,
That on its southern side the river bounds;
The fellow bank is a smooth slip of lawn,
Skirted abrupt by bold romantic mounds,
With foliage hanging as from garden grounds:
These lead the eye to open fields of grass:
But loveliest is that pool the glen surrounds.
High above all rears a stupendous mass,—
A rock-built range of towers that frown upon the Pass."

Descending with the Dove into Narrowdale, the sides of which are *ribbed* by most gigantic, iron-looking appearances of rock-work, if it be in the hour of an autumnal sunset, there is a tint of rich crimson light thrown upon those blue tors, that may be well imagined by one who has seen or read of the hues of twilight as lent to the dun peaks and crags of Switzerland; but for which I have seen nothing in Britain that can furnish a fitting simile. At the bottom of the glen, where we are lingering, all is so dusk; while the turret-peaks and projections above are so touched with that lovely light! Here, or rather a little further down, was it that Edwards mused and said—

"By the dense air dilated, on the height,
That object still the mind's attention fills,
Pondering the effect of place, and shade, and light.
Nature exacts our wonder as she wills:—
The shadows dancing on the sunny hills,
And those of spectral shape that walk the clouds;
The echoes whose wild voice the desert thrills;
The silent mists passing in wreathed shrouds;
The giant crags, here lone; there gathering in crowds;—

"The lurid banner of the thunder storm,
Flashing athwart with elemental fire;
The water-spout, whose strange portentous form
Stoops his proboscis like a downward spire,
The crater of the clouds; and, from the pyre
Of kiln or furnace vomited amain,
The smoke, whose trailing serpent-folds attire
The moorlands: these are the majestic train,
The retinue of Dove in Nature's mountain reign."

Passing next the mill and a few cottages, so picturesquely grouped in Milldale, and pleased with any trait or touch of human nature in a spot so lone and strange, we shortly afterwards find ourselves in FAIRYLAND. You smile at my calling the next few miles of Dovedale downwards by that name. But you shall read Scott, or the Ettrick Shepherd, or any or all of the writers whose fancies have revelled in the richest realms of romance and beauty, and yet find nothing in them more wondrous, curious, wild, and beautiful, than here! Towers, spires, pyramids, arches, cupolas, obelisks, minarets, grottos, vaults—mimickry of castle, cathedral, and cottage—in short, all varieties of form that rock could take in the hands of the Universal Architect and Artist—are so blended with every tint of moss and fern, foliage and flower, that one would think it impossible for the most inventive fancy to add a single feature. Nor is this kind of scenery confined to one spot, but keeps opening and closing—and opening, closing, and opening again, as on we proceed, mile after mile, gladdened by the motion, brightness, and voice of the river—until all care of noting distinct objects dies away, and the soul gives up entirely to a dreamy and delicious entrancement!

Such is the scenery—sometimes towering up and overhanging in such a way as nearly to shut out the sky—anon, opening and sloping backward, as if welcoming the light to its innermost bosom—now with just passage for the foot between rock and river—next with a manifold path winding far up the hill-side—until we come at last to the foot of Thorp Cloud, the mountain-guardian of the pass, lifting its battle-axe on high—and find ourselves once more in the common though still beautiful world, with a glimpse of Ashbourn spire far down the glade before us, and Dove welcoming the waters of the Hamps and Manifold from the classic scenes of Ham,—whence it hastens on to the broad, sunny plains of Tutbury, and soon falls into the Trent.

Thus, while the Dane and Goyt from one side of Axe Edge find their way through further rivers and seas to the Atlantic; the Wye and the Dove, from the other, seek the German Ocean.

Chapter Thirty-Third.

MATLOCK BATH.

WHEN Nature had completed Switzerland, there was left one beautiful fragment for which she had no further use in that country; so she set it in Derbyshire, amid a framework of romantic hills, and in time it came to be called the Gem of the Peak. That Gem is Matlock. As was sure to be the case, there was anon a clustering—not to say a crowding—round so attractive a spot: yet notwithstanding all the over-doings and drawbacks of which some writers have complained, Matlock still remains a gem, and will do so as long as Masson rears its piny crest, or Derwent awakes among the crags, from High Tor to Willersley, those echoes of its own unslumbering voice which can be called neither song nor shout—though an ever-varying cadence, so far removed from monotony that it would be wrong to call it by any other name than music.

A recent writer has bestowed upon Matlock Bath a very unworthy designation, which I will not do it the injustice to copy. It is quite true that, owing to the land on that side of the river belonging to a great

number of small owners, there is no uniform principle of taste displayed either in the position or architecture of the majority of the buildings. Every one has gratified his own fancy or his sense of convenience;—and some fancies may not have been tasteful at all; whilst the convenience of one person may here and there have been the inconvenience of another. But this want of uniformity is not without some few redeeming charms of its own. Any one who visits "the Bath," as the whole valley is called, with an eye for its natural beauties, may well forgive a few artificial flaws; and I would back the impression of Mr. James Gregor Grant against all detraction. It was after that true poet and artist had imbued his soul with the best scenery of the English lakes and of Switzerland, that, even in December, he was so touched with the beauty of this dale as to write—

"Oh! lovely valley! wildly, sweetly fair!
How like a floating vision dost thou seem!
The glory and the stillness of a dream
Hang, dovelike, brooding over earth and air:
E'en stormy winter here seems charm'd to spare
And flings no icy chains upon thy stream;
But on its lovely banks as rich a gleam
Of golden light as summer's self could wear.
Listen and gaze! how sweet and solemn all!
Listen again, one only sound we hear,
The gurgling cadence of the river's fall,
Murmuring afar, or gently rippling near,
Oh 'Happy Valley!' prison'd as thy thrall,
Who would not rest a willing captive here!"

It would be impossible for me now to detail all the features of so rich a panorama, or penetrate to the curiosities of the caverns, grottoes, and petrifying wells abounding beneath. An Adam may demonstrate their

geology, a Bernays the chemistry of their waters, a Bryan or a Smedley expatiate on the best points of view, or the most effective methods of developing the grandeur of the caverns by torch or coloured light. A Boden might give a history of all the odd things, from a bishop's wig to a wren's nest and eggs, that have been put through the process of petrifaction in the wells; a Walker could describe the sweetest and quietest nooks and bends of the river at which to moor your skiff; or a Vallance display all the possible purposes of use and ornament to which Art can apply Nature's local products of spar and ore, marble and icle, crustation and crystal. Any district guide-book, too, would tell all about the Old Bath, the New Bath, the Fountain Bath, and all the inns and boarding houses that stud the hills and rocks, from Hodgkinson's way-side Hotel, to the highest cot that, like some Oberland chalet, may be descried on the "Heights of Abraham"—a modern name given to the lower reaches of Masson. It is not that the "Devonshire" the "Rutland" and "Cumberland" Caverns, with the "High Tor Grotto," are not all, or each, well worthy of a chapter—including the romantic story of the men who were formerly pent up in some great excavation,—one getting released, after much difficulty, alive, and another being petrified into a statue of himself, and being found in that state after a great lapse of time;—or the more recent story, of Bryan's wife and son getting lost in the vaults and labyrinths of the Devonshire Cavern, and at length finding their way out, without a light. All these caverns, with the Dungeon Tors, and many other of

Nature's handiworks in stone, are well worth knowing, and it would be pleasant too, were I merely writing a local guide, to dwell on the abundance of indoor comforts that might be commanded, at Matlock Bath, by the visitor of a season or the tourist of a day. But my object, as well as my taste, leads me ever from the beaten track—

> "To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell,
> To slowly trace the forest's shady scene,
> Where things that own not man's dominion dwell,
> And mortal foot hath ne'er or rarely been;
> To climb the trackless mountain all unseen;
> With the wild flock that never needs a fold;
> Alone o'er steeps and foaming falls to lean;
> * * * * * * to hold
> Converse with Nature's charms and view her stores unroll'd."

True, here it would be difficult now to find any scene quite so lonely. Every prospect has *some* touch of human nature about it. Yet he who loves the abstraction that is not solitude but comes near enough to it for all purposes of meditation, may revel to his heart's content in many a wild spot near Matlock.

Did you never hear of the view of Bonsall Dale, with its chain of bright ponds, from Bawlea-side, near the Slinter Tor? or of the Via Gellia, and the waterfall there, foaming down through the dark wood from Dunsley Spring, into the light, to join the passing stream, —my mother's native stream,—filling all the valley as with the music of fairy bells?

> "There's not in the wide world a valley more sweet
> Than the vale in whose bosom those bright waters meet."

And what would not any one give for a day-dream on Fox Cloud—that mass of grey rocks by Cromford Moor-

side, *half-hidden from below* by trees and herbage, yet, when once reached, commanding *a view of all below!* Or the still loftier mass of Stonnus, with a yet more expansive and enchanting prospect—a bird's eye view of Matlock, Willersley, Cromford, Bonsall, and all around? To a cottage near the feet of those rocks I once retired for a short residence, in summer; and the view of Willersley Castle as a central object—backed by Masson—flanked by the peak of the High Tor on one hand and Scarthing Rocks on the other—fronted by a green slope to the Derwent and Wild Cat Tor—and reigning in a scattered region of old Roman encampments, disused lead-mines, clean though modern manufactures, and extending railways—and all under a cerulean or a calmly dappled sky—is a picture that will accompany me wherever I go, and live in beautiful contrast with those wilder and lonelier retreats that abound within the range of that glowing horizon.

These—with a ramble over Cromford Bridge, along the Derwent-side, by Lea woods and mills, up to the old chapel at Dethick, or the Roman remains on Riber; or, contrariwise, to the more primitive scenes around Winster—the sunny knolls and meadows of Darley Dale or Ashover, or fifty other pleasant places—some "far-known and noted," others scarcely known at all, except to the naturalist and the solitaire—may all be summed up in the experience of the sojourner in a spot of which that gentle American woman of genius, Mrs. Sigourney, says—

> "Most beautiful! It fits not speech like mine
> Soul-stirring scene, to set thy features forth

> In their true light. I have no hues that reach
> Glories like thine. The watery tint alone
> That moisteneth the eye may tell of thee !"

Speaking comparatively of my own experience. There are now only four counties in England with which I am not more or less acquainted. From passing a Christmas-day with that genial soul, the late Bernard Barton, by his own fireside, at rural old Woodbridge—to snowballing, with Frederick Johnson and Massey Lopez, on the top of Helvellyn, at midsummer—my observation of the life and scenery of our country could not well be otherwise than extensive and varied. And to this have been added many glimpses and loiterings in some of the fairest parts of Scotland, Wales and Ireland. Yet after all—and not the less for my recollection of many former visits—on riding through Matlock Dale once more, in the autumn just past, the scene was as rich, and in nearly all respects as interesting, as when I first gazed upon it at a time when I had seen but little besides wherewith to compare or contrast it. The gleaming peaks and shadowy crags, the golden leaves, the rushing stream, the stately hills, the azure sky, the slowly bending smoke-wreaths from upland habitations, the calmly over-sailing birds, and the touches of life and character in the street below, adding to all the rest the tone of human cheerfulness,—it was impossible not to feel that, however I might have rejoiced in more distant scenes, it would have been missing one of the loveliest had I never known Matlock.

Chapter Thirty-Fourth.

A NINE DAYS' RAMBLE.

THE month of October, 1842, was, on the whole, a season peculiarly calm and bright, though occasionally softened with light clouds and brief showers—such as artists say *help* the character of a landscape—and it was about the middle of the month that three friends met by appointment, at Ashford-in-the-Water, for a ramble in some of the principal dales. These were Mr. Edward Bramley, now town-clerk of Sheffield; Mr. William Fisher, jun., a merchant of the same town—lovers of whatever is beautiful in nature and art,—and myself. Besides having much in common, we had the advantage of harmony in our very differences; and thus whatever was enjoyed by one was enjoyed by all. Should there be other three friends in England of similar tastes, I could scarcely wish them a greater treat than that they should devote a leisure week to a similar excursion, in describing which, though I may have to touch now and then upon scenes already passed, I shall be pardoned by the reader, because of their being taken consecutively with others, or presented in new aspects.

My two companions had arrived at Ashford by a route very different from mine. Having left Sheffield early in the morning, they had walked up the valley of the Porter, to Ringing Low—thence by Longshaw to Eyam, Stony Middleton, and Hassop Hall;—whilst, starting later in the day, I had gone by coach, through Baslow, to Bakewell; and walking on to Ashford, joined them in the evening at the Devonshire Arms inn, where most of the preliminaries of our further journey were settled over a plain but refreshing meal. How doubly delicious and renovating seems every mouthful of food a man eats, when he is out for a ramble like that we were then commencing!

Rising the next morning with the sun, at the close of a gentle shower, we took the road to Taddington Dale; and having lingered in its rocky defiles till all its romantic features had become living pictures to remain with us for ever,—with every accidental figure of wayfarer on the road, quarryman in his perilous toil, shepherd counting his hill-side flock, or waggoner driving his last harvest-load a-field,—we crossed over by the farm of Brushfield Haugh, and down a steep sprinkled with bushes of ripe nuts and other wild fruit, into one of the loveliest parts of Monsal Dale.

Arriving about mid-day at M'Connel's Mills, we made a detour up the subsidiary Dale of Cressbrook, which, though in some parts most rugged and almost pathless, well repaid us by the grandeur of its scenery both for our time and exertion. Returning thence, we kept up by the side of the river to Miller's Dale; and lingering in its many windings—its happy alternations of sun and

shade—sometimes loitering on a little islet, anon gazing down from the shoulder of a neighbouring steep—we found ourselves at length, in the twilight, under the gigantic and impassable masses of rock in Chee Dale.

Turning back from this point by an irregular foot-path, and over the top of Chee Tor, we reached the main road, near the foot of Topley Pike, as the last gleam of sunshine faded from its lofty crest, and pursued our way, (which lay between high rocks and hills,) with the musical stream by our side, and the stars silently stealing out, one by one, to spangle the heavens above us, and thus crown our day's ramble as it drew to a close—at Buxton.

Of course, we met with but few incidents, except those of the emotions within us, in so wild and lonely a walk. There was one, however, displaying a touch of enthusiasm of another sort, not to be forgotten. In passing from Monsal to Miller's Dale, we came upon a genteel angler, so earnest in his sport, and so regardless of the scenery, and of every object or obstacle near, that when he reached one of the loose stone walls common to the neighbourhood, instead of taking his eyes off the bait and climbing over, back he still went, through the wall itself, almost without losing his balance, among the tumbling stones—taking all as coolly as if nothing had happened till his prey was secured; then, not till then, he found leisure for a smile at the difficulties through which he had so unwittingly broken.

As everybody knows every thing that can be known about Buxton—how it had a bath in the days of the

Romans—how in later times it was visited by Mary Queen of Scots—how Byron's name, carved, it is said, by himself, may be seen on one of its trees—how its healing waters, warm and cold, spring side by side—how grand is its "Crescent" of public buildings, shops and boarding-houses—how pleasant its promenades and winding-walks—and how bracing its atmosphere—upon these topics it is needless that I should linger here. In its scenery Buxton is the very contrast of Matlock. At the latter you cannot look out of your window without beholding natural beauty. At Buxton you can see little of nature but bleak hills, unless you take a walk or drive for the purpose. Each place is therefore well adapted, as a resort, for its own class of invalids. The advantages of Buxton are chiefly artificial; but there is a fine recompense for this to those who can enjoy a day's excursion out—whether it be to Castleton or down the valleys of the Wye or Dove.

Our destination, on arising in the morning, was the latter; and leaving Axe Edge on our right, we walked for a short distance along the High Peak Railway; then dropped through the dell of Dower, (catching a glimpse of Church Sterndale by the way,) to the foot of Pikeous Hill and round by Croom. I have always loved the situation of that lone but genteel farm of Mr. Marsden, in the dell of Dower. To live thus at once near to nature, comfort and usefulness, is a life which any man of mind might desire; and I am told that Mr. Marsden takes an interest in all that nature has spread around him.

Passing other substantial farms, lone cottages, and

some ancient tumuli, and touched by the simple but natural conversation of the people we now and then lingered to gossip with, we wandered on with the Dove, to Hartington, which we reached, and after a brief refreshment left, in the mellowing light of a late afternoon. This was on a Saturday; but so quiet and tender grew all around as we passed on, that it seemed as though the sabbath had already begun—or rather, as if we had left the work-day world altogether behind us. And those whose lives are exclusively conventional have little idea how far it is possible to follow old Izaac Walton, even in this late day and in England, and how near it is possible to come to simple nature. Some people bred in cities think all rustics fools; but it is wonderful how much may be learnt from some of them, if we can but observe and listen *in a right spirit* to their homely language. William Cobbett used to say, "if you want to learn how clever a plough-boy is, put a philosopher to the plough-tail." I know a place in Derbyshire called Raven's Nest—you can perceive how lonely it is by the very name; and there lives a little girl of three years old, called Annie Birks, who has never had a human play-fellow under fifteen. The consequence is, that nearly all her mates have hitherto been either domestic animals or the wild things that come about the cottage-garden and the croft; and though she has yet scarcely learned any human words, except *Father* and *Mother*, she can imitate nearly all other gentle sounds that reach their solitary dwelling. So far from seeming stolid or perverse, she is one of the sweetest, blithest, happiest little children I

know in the world. Her eyes beam with an overflowing intelligence; and when she talks it is in the language of the birds, the streams, the breathing trees, and other natural voices: but, some how, one can understand very well what she means; for what she expresses is *truth* in its young simplicity, and *can* only have *one* meaning;—and think you not that, when little Annie Birks grows up, she will know more, and be able to tell more, of the true life of the things by which she has thus been educated, than many a collegian who could talk of them only in the language of books? Thus, too, it was with a poor boy, in the employment of Farmer Gold, with whom we met this afternoon in the upper part of Dovedale, near Pilsbury Grange—a motherless bairn with a drunken father—and who, in other language, told us his own experience with all the fidelity and pathos of a Dickens.

But soon were we where scarcely a human being—rustic or otherwise—could be met,—past Pike Pool, Beresford, the Iron Tors, Mill Dale, and (as the night came on) at the upper entrance to that wild region, which in a previous chapter I have called Fairyland—though it proved no Fairyland to us *that* night: for, through some mistake, we lost our way, by departing too far from the river's edge and ascending the hillside, where we got separated, with no track of any kind to follow, nor any guide, save the fitful voice of the river below us—or our own shouts—which were sometimes rendered ludicrously uncertain by the echoes repeating them to each other, as if in mirthful mockery of our bewilderment.

In that uncertainty, and in a neigbourhood of precipitous quarries and banks of loose shale, at length it became dangerous to move one way or another, and we were seriously thinking which would be the least unsafe—to risk rheumatism, or perhaps a consumption, by remaining "near neighbours of the stars" all night, or the breaking of our necks in a scramble to the bottom; when the question was providentially set at rest by Bramley gliding—whether accidentally or not I am not now quite sure—down a heap of shale, till he found, at some distance, a lodgment and a path, and so was able to direct Fisher and myself in what way to follow him. It was well we recovered the track thus timely; for there presently came on a heavy shower of rain. In the meanwhile, without any further mistake or mishap, we found ourselves rejoicing at the adventure, over a comfortable supper, at the Izaak Walton inn, where a good sleep, and an awaking to all the beauties of a bright morning in such a land, prepared us for another happy day.

Believing the sabbath to be nowhere, if not in the mind—and feeling that if it be *there* we are as near to God in one place as in another—I have never felt myself less of a worshipper among the mountains, when the occasion came, than in some house made with human hands. Wherever a man feels most with God, that is his true "place of worship." Hence, while I would not persuade any one, contrary to his conscience, from the cathedral or the conventicle, I shall not hesitate, through fastidiousness, to avow that, on the Sunday of which I am writing, we repaired to that

temple of which Thorp Cloud is the spire, Dovedale the aisle, unhewn tors the pillars, the blue heavens the roof, Nature's voices the choir, and Christ in all good things the minister. To me it was truly a *solemn* day; but, so far from being *melancholy*, it was one of the most cheerful and hopeful of my life; and the pulsations of Divine Love filled the heart, and thrilled every vein and nerve with a sense of gratitude, and praise. As to whether or not it be right to give ourselves up to the enjoyment of created things on peculiar days, it all depends upon our looking on them, as upon the Bible, in their divine or spiritual meaning; for all nature is a grand, complicated, yet orderly and harmonious heiroglyph of Love and Wisdom, corresponding to *that* Book—is, in short, the material, as *it* is the spiritual Word of God, to those who can open their eyes and read it;—and what an eloquent chapter of the Creation was Dovedale to us that day!

Slowly wandering on, and lingering oft, we realized some fresh beauty, were impressed by some new touch of sublimity, at every step. The little river abounding with islets and falls; the rocks, here feathered half-way up with rich foliage, as they struck up to the very arch of the sky; yonder naked to the top, or only clad in ivy, then crowned at last by some tree as isolated and as beautiful as a palm in the desert. Next we came upon a grotto or cave, then a tower or pyramid;—anon to that semblance of sacred architecture called Dovedale Church;—finally, to two giant obelisks, set, as if by design, for a portal from those scenes through which we had come the day before;—the whole dashed over

with all the loveliest tints of autumn, and filled to the heavens with nature's softest music! What a scene for the geologist—those uncrumbling remnants of an antediluvian world! for the botanist—those varying structures of a year! for the artist—those groupings of every graceful form, those clothings in every delicate hue! for the poet, the transmutation of them all into immortal thought! and even the invisible angels might not unaptly rejoice in those and many other uses of such scenes to beings "made only a little lower" than themselves, and in whose instruction and elevation they must take such true delight!

Turning up by Mill Dale to Alstonefield, and thence by a few miles' walk to Whetton, we had a beautiful picture of the people passing over their autumnal fields to church; and soon we reached a point on the banks of the Manifold, barely accessible, and commanding a far view of the country and the winding stream—a narrow ledge of a mighty rock, rising high above and descending deep below to the foaming and roaring waters. And on this narrow ledge, so difficult of access, was the wide arched portal to a vast cavern in that rock—known to this day as *Thor's House*—a gloomy temple to the Scandinavian god, Thor. Whatever Nature might first have done in the formation of this place, the hand of man has considerably modified—the pillars, arches and roof more resembling the crypt of a great cathedral than anything natural. More recently I visited this strange scene on a somewhat gloomy day in winter—a little boy, who had heard of it, but had never before been in it, accompanying me from Whet-

ton. We had no sooner, however, got fairly inside, than the poor little fellow so shuddered with horror, that, from a feeling of pity, I brought him out again as quickly as possible, and came away. It was certainly the most gloomy spot, at that time of the year, I ever was in; and when I thought of the horrid mysteries of which it might, in former ages, have been the arena, and listened the wailing and roaring of the winds and waters outside, I was little less loth than the poor boy to beat a retreat. The Sunday I was there with my two friends being so bright and calm, the view from the portal compensated for the gloom within, and our twilight walk back through green meadows and woods, and now and then under the brow of romantic rocks, or by retired hamlets or cots, to Ilam village and the Izaak Walton, again, made a pleasant completion to so rich and varied a circuit, and furnished us with an abundance of interesting motives to thought and conversation.

The day following found us in a somewhat desultory mood. Our sabbath experience had been too rich to be easily forgotten. One of us climbed Thorp Cloud; another took a short walk to the junction of the Manifold with the Dove; then we all three went together, to Mr. Watts Russell's tasteful seat, Ilam Hall; saw Chantrey's exquisite monument to Mr. Russell's father in the old church; explored the beautiful model-village studded around; and after returning to dine at the Walton, closed the evening with another short ramble in Dovedale—now grander than ever in the changing and fading lights and shadows.

Morning the fifth saw us, hale and hearty, on our way through the village of Thorp, and presently in that of Tissington—one of the most pleasant, bowery and blossomy places in Derbyshire, and famed everywhere for its annual floral "well-dressings." We could gladly have lingered there a whole day; but our time being half gone and our distance not half done, away we sped, staff in hand, by Balidon, to that curious heap of calcined rocks on Brassington Moor; and thence descended through the Via Gellia,—wild and beautiful Via Gellia!—to Bonsall, Cromford, and Matlock Bath.

It is needless—having already given a chapter to that place—that I should tell you all we saw at Matlock Bath on this day, but there was one event there not to be overlooked—the opening of the newly-built church, the spire of which has so pretty yet diminutive a look,—diminutive as contrasted with the works of Nature all around it. Bryan, the guide, was pointing out some interesting scenery to us, as we sat with him upon the rocks on the Willersley side of the river, just as the first service in the church concluded. So, besides seeing the effect on the landscape of the people passing away in the sunshine, to their homes and the boarding-houses, we had afterwards the spectacle of the bishop and forty of the assembled clergy, leaving in a body. It was the first time in my life that I had seen a bishop. We met him afterwards taking a walk. He was a portly, good-natured, intelligent-looking prelate; but I did not then think his dress made him look more venerable or apostolic. I have seen many bishops since, and become so familiar with their costume that it has

not now affect me in the same way. This, therefore, I have recorded as my unsophisticated impression *then*. To what peculiarities will custom reconcile our tastes! My dear old father, with his military face—how much at home he seemed to me in his broad quaker's hat and drab coat! and how it jarred with my feelings when, for a moment, I once saw him put on another sort of hat! I dare say the bishop would have thought him as *outré* in the one to which he was accustomed. The peculiarity of each was an external of his religion; and as the son of a quaker I have little right, perhaps, to find fault with the habit of a bishop. I am sure the stout old prelate had a touch of nature about him, by the way in which his eye gleamed, and his whole countenance lit up, as he gazed at the High Tor, and pointed out some of its features to the fair and gentle being, probably his daughter, who was standing by his side. And how many other genial qualities might live beneath that portly, formal exterior!

The distance from Matlock to Rowsley may now be accomplished in a few minutes, by railway. That evening we had to walk it—but it was up by the Derwent-side, and through all the delicious scenery of Darley Dale; and probably we should not have ridden if we could. In the constitution of the Peak, Nature has been a strict economist as well as artist. Wherever she happens to have given a romantic region of rugged rocks to the miner, she has almost invariably given, in the next transition, a fine, soft, open pastoral dale to the husbandman and the shepherd. Overcome by the grandeur of the climbing and overhanging cliffs

of Matlock, the mind takes a long breath to recover its wonted tone, on reaching the spreading and gently swelling pastures and corn-fields extending on every hand around the grey old church, villas and cottage-homes of Darley-in-the-Dale, to which the hills, woods and rocks of Wensley and Stanton give so rich and graceful a finish. There is a very beautiful place in Yorkshire named Wensley Dale; and you must not confound it with the Wensley Dale of Derbyshire, which is one of the tributaries to this of Darley. The Derbyshire Wensley Dale is not less beautiful than the Yorkshire one, however—though of less dimensions. It is touched or dashed all over with picturesque life, and forms a fitting gradation from Darley to the more wild and ancient scenes of natural crag, or druidical device, in the neighbourhood of Birchover, at which we shall arrive presently by another route. We lingered a little in Darley church-yard, where there is a very large and noted old yew-tree; and then after striking up through Stanton Woods to see a druidical circle there, and various other kindred objects beyond, we dropped down to Rowsley Inn, where our day's adventures were finished by one of my companions giving me a magnetic rest, and then wondering at the effect of his own operation.

Our next day's excursion was up to the Rowtor Rocks, near Birchover—by far the most remarkable assemblage of rocks I have seen in the kingdom. Rowtor is so named from the provincial word *row* or *rowe*—to *rock* or *roll*, and *tor*, a tower. The large rocking-stone alone would, however, not be so remarkable as there

are many such in various parts of the country; but the cells, steps, and oddly shaped objects approximate, are all of a character to arrest attention and excite curiosity; nor less marvellous are yon other masses of rock within view, about Robin Hood's Stride and Mock Beggar's Hall. Robin Hood's Stride is so named from two natural pillars—or if not natural, still more wonderful as works of human contrivance—standing some distance apart from each other, and very conspicuous objects for miles around. Mock Beggar's Hall is a great cell, or cave, at hand; and a rude crucifix is engraven on the rock at its entrance. The country around harmonises well with such strange objects; and Stanton, with its elegant mansion, the seat of the Thornhills—its spire glinting up from the trees hard by, and a lofty monumental tower rising out of the dark woods beyond and overlooking all—now lit by a stream of sunshine, anon shaded for a moment by some scudding cloud—fill up the back-ground and complete a picture not easy to be forgotten. We returned at night by way of Stanton Woodhouse, another of the rural retreats of the Duke of Rutland.

Our eighth day was occupied in a ramble by Alport, and up the lone dell of the Lathkil—without exception the most transparent I have ever seen, abounding throughout, too, with thousands of the liveliest and most beautiful trout. And yet, notwithstanding this purity, it is so impregnated with petrifying qualities, that year by year, it turns its own green crops of cresses and other herbs into porous stone, sometimes as curious as frost-work,—retaining and yet playfully

re-forming its own hard channel for ever! Have you never seen an analogue to this in human life, where streams of love and intelligence, without ever leaving their own true sphere, are perpetually giving fresh form and character to all that comes in their course?

Yet even the lone Lathkil is not without some few features of enterprise and industry. There is a part of it where one of the hugest waterwheels has been constructed to drain the approximate lead-mines; and now and then you come to the mouth of a groove, with a cluster of people at work around it. At one of these I met with a little incident—not too personal, perhaps, to be recorded. Speaking with an overlooker, who told me his name was Bateman, and that he came from Middleton-by-Wirksworth, I observed that my mother, now dead, was a native of that distant mountain hamlet. "Hey!" said he, "then where do you come from?" "Originally," was my reply, "from Nottinghamshire." "Ah! then," he rejoined, "I'll answer for it you are Nelly i' th' Fieldt's lad!"—Nelly in the Field (as said in our first chapter) being my mother's maiden sobriquet. He had not seen my mother for nearly forty years; but he knew her history, and thus drew his inference: and need I say how dear such an incident came to my heart, in so remote a spot, where I had not expected to pass a word with any but the two companions of my tour?

Picturesque rocks and natural cells abound in the Dale of the Lathkil: and the names of places in the neighbourhood are some of them very ancient—others peculiarly quaint and significant. Near to its head is

the old grange of *One-Ash*, and a mile or two over the pastures is the village of *Mony-Ash*. *Over Haddon* is near, on one side, and *Callen's Low* on the other; and by *Callen's Low* we come to *Youl-Greave*. *Cael's Dale* is a tributary ravine; with *Arbor Low*—a scene of great interest to the antiquarian—not far off.

As we mounted the dale-side, came to Callen's Low, and looked back, the landscape, in the glimmering light of evening, had an association for me in which my two companions could hardly participate. In the days of my childhood and youth, I had devoutly read and mused on the biography—the doings and sufferings—of the early Quakers. Amongst them one of my favourites was JOHN GRATTON, the earnest apostle of their principles in the Peak. Without the slightest pretence or wish now to be one of their sect, it would be ungrateful in me to forget what I owe to their quaint literature. At a time when boys generally are indulging in the romance of fiction, I was deeply impressed with the far more wondrous romance and poetry of truth, as indicated in the psychical and social experience of that once brave and unconventional, but peaceful people. Hence, when for the first time—and in that calm hour—I gazed upon the fields in which John Gratton, who was a native of Monyash, had, as we are told in his autobiography, passed his early days in tending cattle and sheep—and thought how, as he said, "the word of the Lord" came to him there, in Nature's peaceful reign—that outspread plain, with its distant speck of a village, and dim hills beyond, had as classical and touching a charm for me, as ever Par-

nassus had for poet, Marathon for soldier, Mecca for Mahometan, or A'Beckett's shrine for Catholic devotee!

Our return was through Youlgreave village, catching a glimpse of Middleton, the seat of Mr. Bateman, the archæologist, and down by the Bradford-brook to the plain of the Wye and our inn once more,—and bidding farewell to Rowsley next morning, and taking Haddon and Chatsworth in our way home, we arrived in view of Sheffield in the sweet hour of sunset, having walked altogether about two hundred miles.

One of the last incidents worthy of note, as we left the Peak country, was on the turnpike-road, between Calver Mill and Froggatt, and it formed a remarkable contrast to what we had just seen at Chatsworth, where everything was splendidly arrayed for the reception of the Grand Duke Michael, who was then momently expected. Upon a bank, in the valley, a number of men and boys, with dogs, were very actively engaged in catching rabbits; and two gentlemen—one entirely in dishabille, as if abandoned for the time to utter relaxation—were looking on, and philosophising. The other gentleman I at once knew to be Mr. D'Ewes Coke, who, with his companion, entered into a gossip with me on the scenes of our ramble, and on some events at that period occurring in my native place. Next day Mr. Coke happened to call upon me in Sheffield, and told me that—which from his dishabille I could not before have imagined possible—the personage we had seen with him at the rabbit-hunt was Lord Chief Justice Denman!

Chapter Thirty-Fifth.

HADDON AND CHATSWORTH.

HADDON and Chatsworth! What kindred, yet what contrasted, associations! Haddon, antiquated, lone, silent, hoary—its very light the gleam, its atmosphere the breath of ages departed—its echoes of our footsteps almost as startling as those of Herculanæum or Pompeii;—Chatsworth, an example of modern magnificence and profusion—unrivalled save in royal halls! Both ducal by inheritance—their lands adjoining, and each, in its time, known as *the* Palace of the Peak—they severally represent the past and the present with thrilling effect. In a region of mountains and woods and streams, remote from city turmoil and din, yet accessible, by railway, from all parts of the busy kingdom; and, under certain reservations and restrictions by no means illiberal, open to ALL ranks of the people; they would almost make a democrat thankful for that law of primogeniture which has prevented their being aforetime disposed of piecemeal, and has preserved them to this late day, in which the oldest of

our aristocracy, as well as our Monarch and her Consort, are alike emulative in teaching the luxury of letting the public enjoy all that time has sanctified and education improved in their keeping.

Haddon is descended through a long line of Avenalls, Bassets, Vernons, and Manners', to the present Duke of Rutland. It is an often enlarged and modified, yet harmonious pile—dating probably from the time of Edward III., if not earlier. Not sufficient of an architect to describe such a fabric in technical language, and not disposed to fill my brief space by merely copying what has been so often, and so ably done by others, I will not enter here into elaborate details. I will say, however, that it brings into our presence, by its arrangements and aspects, every generation that has occupied it—that, as was said by Lord John Manners at a recent gathering within its walls, "it speaks alike to the antiquary, the poet, the historian and the social economist; and shows us, in its ample arrangements and provisions, that, though we may have learnt of late to enshrine *the individual* in greater luxury, we may even yet take a lesson from our forefathers in their hospitable care for the wants of *the many*."

At a distance, the towers and turrets, the lofty walls and buttresses of Haddon, would make you think that it had been built chiefly for a place of defence in war. But, once inside, that idea is supplanted immediately by a perception of its greater adaptability for all the purposes of an hospitality so ample and renowned as to remain, even yet, an example and a watchword in the families of the great.

On a gentle ascent from the banks of the Wye,—at a distance of two miles from Bakewell, and somewhat less perhaps from Rowsley,—there it stands, amid the green landscape, in equal relief and repose, winning rather than commanding the gaze of every eye, and waking a pensive but not uncheerful feeling in every heart. You approach it with a sentiment almost of veneration—it is so old and grey, yet so dignified and perfect. You tread its deep-worn steps and enter its lofty portals, and the presence of Time himself, with his wrinkled visage and hoary beard, were he palpably visible, could hardly lay you under a spell more complete. You find yourself presently in its vast and antique banquetting hall—open to the rafters—with its oaken galleries and panellings, its massive tables, buck-horn ornaments, fire-place with a cart-load of wood just ready for lighting, relics of worn-out drinking customs, and everything, in short, except the people, to tell you what was doing there hundreds of years ago; and the people themselves—I defy you to keep even them out of your imagination. Their footmarks and handmarks—the stains of their cups and horns and trenchers, the indentures of their whittles, and many another memorial of their habits—make you almost listen if so be some faint echo of their last songs and jokes may not also be lingering in the adjacent rooms.

You then look into the kitchens and larders, and see at once by the arrangements there, that a whole ox could be dealt with as summarily within that place as you and the little party around your breakfast table could now despatch a muffin or a crumpet. You then

glance at numerous other rooms, and inner courts, and at length reach the great gallery, a room one hundred and ten feet in length and seventeen feet wide, with its large diamond windows, looking out on the fine old terrace, and ancient trees, and far-stretching landscape. You visit the state bed-room, and see the very bed in which slept Queen Elizabeth. You ascend to the roof, and climb the towers, and gaze around you on mountain and valley—on wood, and rock, and distant spire. And finally you descend to the chapel, matching, in all its ecclesiastical traits, the secular scenes to which it is akin; and laying aside your "high church" or "low church" or sectarian prejudices, feel how true it is that

"All forms of worship wake some thoughts divine."

On passing out, you see a Roman altar, and turn aside for a moment into that interesting nook, the chaplain's room, where you can inspect, if so disposed, a buckskin doublet, a curious old cradle, the chapel bell, pewter plates and dishes, a matchlock of the seventeenth century, and several other mementos of the far past. The hearth of this room is encircled by a stone, raised some inches above the floor, instead of a fender.

Such, with hundreds of symbolical devices, attachments, and memorials, befitting its age and uses, is the old Hall of Haddon. But recently I saw it employed for as noble—perhaps a nobler use than ever it knew in the olden time,—when its present lord, with a number of his family and friends, (and visited by the Duke of Devonshire with his,) met five hundred of the members of the Bakewell and High Peak Institute and

their friends of every class, in one great, beautiful, and intellectual assemblage, under its venerable roof, to talk with them frankly, cordially, parentally and fraternally, about the future as well as the past, and to learn how they might carry forward the treasures of the one to the enrichment of the other, in the spirit of men loving their God, their country, and their kind.

The occasion of my attendance, was that I might write a sketch of the proceedings for a local newspaper; and what a glorious sight, on that lovely, sunny, summer evening, in that grand old place, and in that rich, wide landscape! I have seen pictures of famous generals meeting at the close of a great slaughter on the field of battle—pictures, too, of captive kings submitting to their conquerors;—but to see the meeting of those two sons, each of a proud and long-counted race—those descendants of the jealous feudal lords of a hundred surrounding hills—the Dukes of Devonshire and Rutland, with their families, neighbours, tenantry, tradesmen and workpeople about them, for such a purpose—while History and Hope stood smiling by, in those time-honoured courts—were a picture, could it be painted, far surpassing them all!

Some fireworks were displayed in the gardens, on the south side of the building, after the speaking in the banquetting-hall was concluded; and the effect, to me, was beautifully illustrative. Many good pictures of Haddon have been painted. Sometimes the scene has been morning, sometimes evening—and one of the best is a view, from the terrace, by moonlight. But not at any other time, in any other circumstances, could

such a charm be lent to its aspect as by the gorgeous and many-coloured fires that successively lit up its walls and windows that evening.

Now, I love to watch a pyrotechnic display; for, ordinarily, the blaze and glitter have of themselves a wondrous effect on the senses, while they last. But —unlike a mountain, a fountain, a river, or even a cloud—when the excitement is over, no adequate impression, no living picture remains on the mind;—and why? It is a profusion—a waste—like selfish and isolated wealth or grandeur,—unless there be *proper objects, in proper relations, to shine upon.* But seen in connection with these, the effect is permanent, "a joy for ever;" and—not to say more, lest I should be accused of flattery—I could not but feel, (this hypothesis being correct,) how fittingly was thus symbolised the relations of all classes assembled at Haddon on that occasion.

And now let us pass over the hill to Chatsworth. But what is it possible to say of Chatsworth, unless one were to fill an entire book? Save in the most general terms, it were almost as easy to describe the British Museum! Still, as it would be high treason against the county to write any work on Derbyshire and not say something of this favourite seat of a famous family, I must at least give some idea of its general aspect. From a hundred literary sources you are acquainted with the history of the Cavendishes and their former house at Chatsworth, which was destroyed by fire. From Mrs. Jameson you know about their romantic union with the celebrated Elizabeth of Hardwick and

her step-children, by which, and by similar subsequent additions, several properties, almost large enough in the aggregate for a continental kingdom, became at length the possession of one sole owner. You know, from the history of England, what part that chieftain took in the establishment of the present royal line. And you are equally aware how often Queen Victoria has visited the present Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth.

Standing in much the same relation to the Derwent as Haddon to the Wye, and backed by woody heights which are crowned by an old hunting tower that may be seen for many a mile, it occupies a position, on the whole well calculated for effect, and has elegant lodges, gateways, and other outworks, in every direction—indicating its rank and character long before you reach it. If I may be allowed an Irishism, the mansion itself is a magnificent centre with one vast wing; and on that account, at some points of view, strikes the beholder as incomplete. What adds to this feeling is, that the whole is on so large a scale that you can have no hope of living to see the completion—even should it be attempted. For this reason, you never contemplate it with that feeling of *repose* with which you look on Haddon, Hardwick, and many other mansions of days gone by.

But Nature gave me the mind to enjoy rather than to criticise, wherever enjoyment is possible; and though where so much has been done, a few features may seem rather artificial than artistic, it would ill become one of "the people," for whose gratification, as much as for that of the Duke of Devonshire himself, Chatsworth

appears to exist, to give its beauties and wonders the go-by for the sake of particularising defects, either real or imaginary.

Let it suffice, then, that—built as it is of beautiful buff stone, and breasting the noon-day with a magnitude and grandeur almost regal—surrounded by subordinate houses and offices, fit of themselves for the residence of nobles—its gardens and great conservatories filled with the choicest plants of the sunniest climes—its fountains (bright water-rockets!) rushing far up into the sky—its terraces, adjacent lawns and slopes, and far-extending woods—its herds of deer spreading wide away from its noble sweep of river and winding drives—and many another sign and symbol of the ducal reign: these are features that remain on the mind, and find few parallels in our wanderings elsewhere.

As to the rooms inside, I can only speak as might every other casual visitor. I could linger for years among their pictures, carvings, and sculptures, and in the superb library. But having had of necessity to hurry, as an ordinary sight-seer, through each apartment, I never left the picture-galleries without the heart-ache. Where party succeeds party, as wave ages wave, the time for seeing a whole gallery might even be enjoyed upon a single picture. To my mind, the objects in Chatsworth House are at this moment like those of a diorama, one succeeding another too rapidly to be realised, even in this fast age of mental photography. Yet am I more than glad of that small share of the common lot: for what arrangement could

possibly allow the public a longer time in such a place? To have passed from court to hall, and from hall to corridor, and on, on, on, from gallery to gallery, and then to have burst upon the gorgeous sight that greets one on entering the great state-rooms—where the carvings and costly furniture within, and the fountains and one of the finest landscapes of the Peak—a far-stretching vista, rich as the Vale of Tempe, without—kindle up the soul and thrill all its faculties—were at any time a feast for the tourist on which he might retire to dream for many an after-year!

And then—the historical associations of Chatsworth! its kinship with grey old Hardwick and other familiar places and events of the past, and with the Crystal Palace and other bright scenes of the passing and coming time——But what a wide expansion of themes is opening around us here! requiring not the simple fragment of a chapter, like this, but volume upon volume, with the brain of a Shakspere, the heart of a Goldsmith, and the hand of a Michael Angelo, to fill them!

Chapter Thirty-Sixth.

SCENES ROUND ASHOVER.

WILL you now, in conclusion, be my guest in the quiet pastoral vale of Ashover, where the Peak begins to descend to the Plain, between Matlock and Chesterfield, just upon the western verge of Scarsdale? Come, stand with me but a few steps from this retired habitation, and look around you. What a calm, peaceful, beautiful picture! Behind is a cotted and pine-crested hill, with many a rill of pure water pouring from its bosom, and making sweet murmurs on its way to supply the inhabitants below, where yon spire is seen tapering above a screen of leafy trees, that surround the Church-yard and shade the Rectory; and round which, again, cluster the homes of the village—a few straggling away along the road-sides, or dotting the distant hills.

"Wandering from mill to mill, from fall to fall," is our little trout-stream, the Amber, finding its way through lone copses and dells and rich meadows, and now and then by some pleasant patrician seat, towards the ruins of Wingfield Manor, and still winding on.

after that, to the Derwent, at Ambergate. Patches of distant heather and open fields, dashed occasionally with spots of woodland, close the scene to the north and north-west. To the south-west and south are slopes of wood and pasture, backed by dark and craggy cliffs—the feet of the latter whitened in one place by hillocks of glittering spar and other *debris*, poured down from the mouth of a great disused lead-mine, and distinguishable for twenty miles or more, like masses of cloud reposing on the dusky upland-side. On the east, with the grey old ruins of Eastwood Hall beneath, stretches a long, rugged, picturesque fringe of wooded rocks, towards Stubbin Edge, the seat of William Mills, Esq.; while between these heights, and stretching far away beyond them, to the verge of the Erewash Valley, with sometimes a faint glimpse of wood or upland beyond even that distant line, is one vast scene of park and pasture, plantation and farm, hall and hamlet, blending and fading from green to grey, and from grey to blue, to the remotest horizon!

By a two miles' ramble, to Little Moor, or to Spite-Winter and South Stanedge,—and especially from the road descending to Slate-pit Dale Bar,—what a view, again, we get of all Scarsdale, from Wingerworth to Renishaw; with the town of Chesterfield in its centre, and Bolsover Castle and Hardwick on its boundary rim! From whatever side we gaze on the district of Scarsdale, it is a luxuriant and most expansive prospect. Its horizon, if not an exact circle or oval, is only so because broken by picturesque hills, or dusky woods, or ancient mansions. And it is filled up with

almost as interesting a variety of objects as those which surround it. The Hall and Park of Sutton-in-Scarsdale, as seen from the old British town of Bolsover or from Palterton, is a beautiful picture—a lovely vignette in a land of beauties.

There is another fine prospect, though of late considerably dashed with coal-works, from North Wingfield Rectory—itself a very interesting old house. Rich, too, exceedingly rich, is the valley of the Amber about Ford and Ogston, as seen from Stretton Hill-side, along which once marched the Roman legions from Little Chester to Chesterfield. And about Wingerworth, Walton, Holymoorside, Summersall, Brampton and Barlow, are many little "regions of rural delight." But for a view in which nearly all of these may be at once embraced, there are few spots that can vie with the back of Ashover Fabric, or Spite-Winter, or South Stanedge, when the sky is clear and the sunshine rests upon them, in a summer afternoon

Nor are the scenes which lie on the southern extremity of the parish less fair, if less extensive. Come, let us go by Mill Town and Brackenfield, to Dethick and Lea. You have read how young Anthony Babington, of Dethick, was beheaded for trying to liberate Mary Queen of Scots from Wingfield Manor, when she was confined there under the Earl of Shrewsbury. What an interest still lingers about the spot where this young man was born! It is a rich little domain on the verge of a vast area of heath, Tansley Moor, which is now however being enclosed. Some of its old buildings—and above all, its neat little chapel—

still remain; and you descend from it through undulating pastures, by winding paths among old trees, to the dell of a rushing stream, and so pass on to the hamlet of Lea, and Lea Mills.

There is a little narrative to give about Mr. Smedley, the owner of Lea Mills, which may not be unpleasing to you. Some time back he was much of an invalid, and hopeless of recovery, till induced to try the hydropathic (cold water) treatment, at Ben Rhydding; and though all other means previously used did him no good, he was there soon cured. Being a person of considerable wealth, and very grateful for his cure, on returning to Lea he established a small hydropathic hospital, at his own expense, for the resort of the poor, and which, I believe, has been exceedingly useful to them. Another feature of Mr. Smedley's character, though to some it might seem singular, is not unsuited to the picturesque locality in which he resides. Without any apparent disposition to found a new sect, but rather to make better known around him what he understands as old gospel truths, he has had a large tent made, and this in the summer season he gets erected in neighbouring hamlets, taking them in rotation, and thus in that moveable chapel, we have a contrast to the time-grey church of Dethick close by: and why should not both be equally useful?

But now let us return to Ashover village—walk through the "Butts Meadows" up the Amber's side—and emerge again into the road, where a tributary rivulet comes down from the tasteful lawns and shrubberies of Marsh Green. Let us pause where this cottage

stands by the side of the bridge, at the turn of the road. What a lovely spot, of its kind, is Nadin's cottage! how clean, how snug, how far surpassing any *fancied* picture of rustic life! What a complete little fruit garden on the bank behind, and what a very paradise of flowers in front, coming close to the brook-side, from the cottage door! Many a time do I linger with delight by Tommy Nadin's cottage; for beautiful, too, is every glimpse of the approximate scenery. The winding glade, through which runs a carriage-drive to ———you don't care to ask where, because you would never wish to see the end of it, it is so retired and calm. Then, the craggy heights of Overton just projecting into view, beyond the masses of trees to the south. And, in the contrary direction, those copses and pastures, up towards Marsh Green House, with a glimpse of some small hamlet, as if drawn a little out of the way, on the hill-side to the right of them. You can hardly turn any way without seeing something that makes you wish to linger.

One of the most marked characteristics of this valley is its frequent sabbath-like stillness—more intense than ever when the sabbath comes, or sometimes under the reign of the full-orbed moon. This has been peculiarly felt by two or three of my visitors as well as myself—my friends Ions, an organist—Stevens, a clergyman—and Wylie, a Scottish prose-poet—especially. To the first, it had all the counter-charm of melody—the silence of nature, awaiting the organ-tones of his own harmonious thoughts. To the second, the whole scene —as we trod yon midnight glade, or returned from it to

the old church-yard, with its green trees that made not even a whisper in the moon-light round the solemn fane they encircled,—the whole scene became symbolical of that church within his own mind, in which he will admit of no dissent nor schism from without to break its perpetual repose and peace. And then, the dissenter,—warm, versatile William Wylie,—whose mind, working contrarily to that of the churchman, took advantage of the stillness to imagine all varied scenes and sounds in the vast world—seeing thus the One in All, as our other friend sees the All in One! Whilst, for myself, I have sometimes been so entranced by these deep calms, that I could almost understand the words—"He walked with God, and was not."

Crossing the meadows and the stream by the mill, and climbing over Lexley, we come suddenly upon a sight of Overton Hall, now the seat of Dr. Bright—formerly of Sir Joseph Banks—one of those irregular and hoary chateaux which one cannot help associating with the stories of gloomy days, when working quaint or grim pictures in tapestry was a lady's chief pastime within doors, as was "hawking" when she went abroad —while, instead of spending "the season" every year in London, a family of distinction was content to have a house for winter use in the county town, going to the metropolis only on great occasions, and keeping up a sort of state in their country mansions during the months of cheerful weather. Yet Overton must have been a fine place for a botanist, like Sir Joseph Banks: for, with such a magnificent change of landscape around him—here sheltered, there open—yonder capped with

clouds, elsewhere gleaming with sunshine—rock and wood, moorland and meadow, all at command, as the mood might suit him—he had as great a variety in as convenient a space as a lover of nature could reasonably wish; and perfect quiet, too, for study, if he wanted it. What more then could such a man desire, after going round the world with Captain Cook, and bringing with him rich collections and recollections from every clime, to make even sombre Overton a Paradise? Besides, so much of the effect of any scene depends on the *mind* of the inhabitant or beholder. What is gloomy to one, may, from some peculiar study or pursuit, be exceedingly cheerful to another; and certainly, if the mansion itself strike us as looking lonely, pensive, old, and grey,—grey, almost, as the rocks around it,—the access from it to the pleasant nooks and prospects near is a noble recompense.

Passing away beneath pines of stature so gigantic as to give to some large trees about them the character almost of brushwood, we are soon under the picturesque assemblage of crags and tors in Overton Park: and next we are on the "hillock" of grand old *Gregory Mine*,—a groove that runs under the mountain for nearly three quarters of a mile, at a depth of more than three hundred yards below the level of its entrance. Hark! what a length of time it takes for the stone we have just thrown in to reach the bottom of the shaft! Dash ——dash-——dash,——and, more faintly now, it dashes still from side to side,—then there is a rumbling, and of echo: it has reached the bottom at last,—its tumble us *feel* the long length of its descent,—and all is still

again. We turn with a strange thrill, not unmingled with fear, look down the *outside* of the hill, and—what a scene! Millions upon millions of tons of spar-spangled deposit, as we have said before, after the lead had been separated from it, was, in the progress of years, rolled down this steep, forming volume upon volume, for a quarter of a mile, or nearly, in the deep, dusky valley. To give some idea of the vastness of this pulverised mass, it only need to be told that after the mine itself had fallen into disuse, ore to the value of £5000 was obtained by sifting it over again, and portions of it are still undergoing the same process for a second or third time!

Climbing from this scene, we are soon upon a piece of table-land, edged on the east by those crags frowning down upon Overton Hall, and known afar in the landscape by its dark plantation of firs; and a footpath to the west presently brings us in view of a lofty ruined tower, standing, the lone sentinel of an interminable region of knolls and peaks and moorland plains, and looking as ancient and romantic as any decayed old Scotch or Irish fortalice,—not without awakening an eager curiosity as to its history.

There never could have been, in the days that are gone, a finer site for a fort than this,—so all but inaccessible from the Plain, and so commanding of all the dim region of the Peak, from the Derwent just below, up to the moorlands on the Staffordshire and Cheshire borders. To add still more to the wildness of the scene, it is growing twilight, and the furnaces of the Erewash Valley in the dusky east, like new-lit

beacon fires, are commencing their evening glow;—while the rising moon, and the last faint sun-streak in the opposite sky, are reflected in a still pool of water which we have discovered in our wanderings, beyond the desolate building. And we have also become aware of a little cottage, just such a one as is generally attached to similar ruins in the sister-isle, and tenanted, like them, by a primitive herdsman. Sure that the cottager's family will be able to give us some traditional clue to the history of so remarkable a spot, we approach his door, and he bids us "good evening;" and now, with open eyes and ears, we are awaiting the story. As a matter of course, we expect to hear of dark deeds of strife and bloodshed, siege and battery, rieving and burning: or how came those great breaches in the walls? or whither is gone the roof, rafters and all? Drearily sighs the wind through rifts and crevices as we make the inquiry. Imagination is worked up to the highest pitch; and at length comes the truth—it is *Overton Engine!*

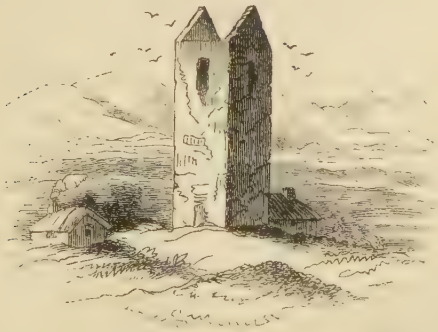
"Overton Engine!" says a young lady to whom we are telling the truthful tale—"Overton Engine—what an unpicturesque name!—what a fall from the third heaven of imagination and romance!—why whatever *could* such a place have been?"

Stay, my fair friend, and let me ask you in turn, have not industry and peace *their* romance—nobler far than the savagery of civil war and destruction? Had this ruin been the dreary monument of some old feud between neighbour and neighbour, or between a king and his people, how would your heart have kindled up

at the recital! But is not that engine-tower as much the land-mark of an interesting age,—the wonderful age of Watt and Bolton who erected it,—as if it recorded only some incident of rapine and bloodshed? It was one of the earliest engines made by James Watt, and was constructed with what was then considered enormous power, to draw out the waters of yonder lead-mine, (at the shaft of which we have just been lingering,) by a well about three hundred and twenty yards in depth, that the miners might work in safety there. Look at the neighbouring village, and at the smiling villas and cottages scattered all around it, a great part of which sprang into existence as by magic from the immense wealth of that mine—richer for those who embarked in it than any "diggings" of equal space yet discovered in Australia or California! No—connected with that now picturesque tower—however ruinous and forlorn its present state—there is certainly no story told of desolated homes and broken hearts. But it *has* its romance, seen in the contrary aspect of families, now counting generations, and still flourishing amidst patrician elegance from wealth thence drawn; and little freeholds, purchased by the savings of industrious workmen, who, having gone to rest, have left the innocent fruits to their children and children's children. And then there is the consideration of what became of the hundreds and thousands of tons of metal thus obtained. True—if such would really add a charm to our narrative, we might not be far wrong in admitting that a *little* of it had entered some thousands of bosoms in the shape of shot, during the war. But how much

more of it is still covering the roofs of churches, public buildings, and peaceful mansions, in town and country! How much, again, is employed in machinery, productive still of further wealth! And was there none in the pewter ware, with which our grandsires dispensed or enjoyed, in their day, each other's renowned hospitalities—to say nothing of a thousand other bloodless but not ignoble uses!

To me there are few spots on earth more interesting than the high table-land upon which stands that shattered tower. I look from it to the east, and descry my father's paternal farm in Sherwood Forest. I look to the west, and boldly swells up on the sight my mother's native mountain in the Peak. While north and south, and all around, the scene, as far as eye can reach, abounds with the pleasantest associations of my boyhood's hopes and my manhood's recollections.



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